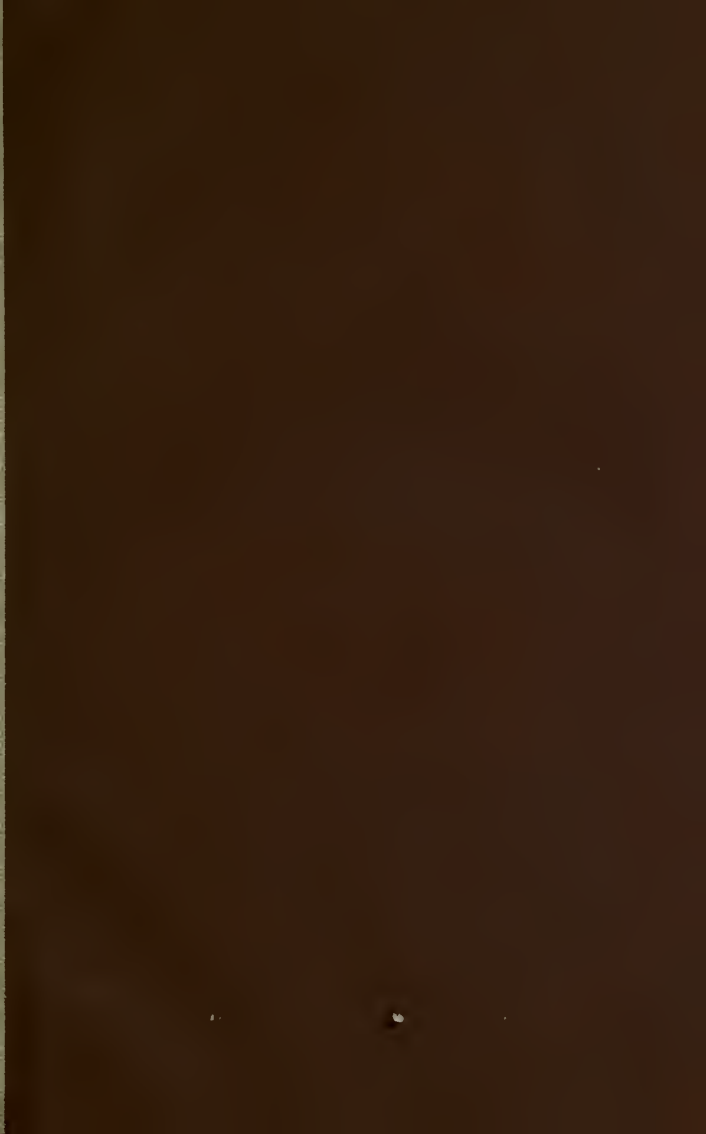


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THE
TITLES OF JEHOVAH:

A SERIES OF LECTURES,

PREACHED IN PORTMAN CHAPEL, BAKER STREET,
DURING LENT 1858.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SIX LECTURES ON THE CHRISTIAN RACE,

PREACHED DURING LENT 1857.

BY THE

REV. J. W. REEVE, M.A.,

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

Third Edition.

LONDON:

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TO

THE CONGREGATION OF PORTMAN CHAPEL,

These Lectures,

PREACHED TO THEM, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND MINISTER,

J. W. REEVE.

12 UPPER HARLEY STREET,
June 1858.

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EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK.

JEHOVAH.

THE God of Abra'am praise,
Who reigns enthroned above ;
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love :
JEHOVAH! Great I AM!
By earth and heaven confess'd ;
I bow, and bless thy sacred name,
For ever blest.

The God of Abra'am praise,
At whose supreme command
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand :
I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame, and power ;
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.

He by Himself hath sworn ;
I on His oath depend ;
I shall, on eagle's wings upborne,
To heaven ascend.
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace
For evermore.

There dwells the Lord our King,
The Lord our Righteousness,
Triumphant o'er the world and sin,
The Prince of Peace :
On Zion's sacred height,
His kingdom still maintains ;
And glorious, with His saints, in light
For ever reigns.

The whole triumphant host
Give thanks to God on high ;
Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost !
They ever cry ;
Hail, Abra'am's God and mine !
(I join the heavenly lays,)
All might and majesty are Thine,
And endless praise.

LECTURE I.

GOD'S ETERNITY.

EXODUS vi. 3.

“And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.”

THE course which I propose (if the Lord will) to bring before you this Lent, is one connected with the titles attached to the name, “Jehovah,” in Scripture. I shall endeavour to draw out the practical bearing of them; to shew the benefit there is to the child of God in thus recognising His Father in these various aspects. My desire for you is, that your knowledge of Scripture should be valuable, in that it does something for you;

that it alleviates your sorrows—that it heightens your joys. My desire for you is, that you may always know where to look, not only for a Saviour who can pardon, and cleanse from sin, but also sympathise in your troubles. So that you may feel there is One who is willing to leave the high heaven in which He dwells, and come down by His Spirit into your circumstances ; and sit with you, and talk with you, and cheer and comfort and direct you ; that thus you may really walk in fellowship with Jesus, and thus be ripened for His kingdom. The benefit and blessedness of this will be, that, when you are called hence, you will have to change only your *place*, not your *company* ; but will go to Him, whom you have loved and served *here*, to serve Him day and night for ever.

I shall take these titles simply as they stand in our Bibles, with the interpretation there given of them ; and may God, the Holy Spirit, graciously help our infirmities, and

enable us to realise what He himself has said,—“They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.”

I bring the text before you, that we may have a general knowledge of what the term, “Jehovah,” means, and what it conveys to a child of God ; and then I shall, in subsequent lectures, endeavour to shew what He is, in connexion with His various titles, to every one that puts his trust in Him.

“The title, Jehovah,” says Serle, “is the grand, the peculiar, and the incommunicable name of God. It neither *is* applied to any created being throughout Scripture, nor *can* be applied in reason ; for it imports the necessary independent and eternal existence of the Most High. This glorious name is applied to *each* and to *all* the persons in the sacred Trinity, throughout the Scriptures. To the Father, as Creator—to the Son, as Redeemer—to the Holy Ghost, as the Divine Agent. To the three persons together, as Trinity in Unity.”

The simple reading of the text would seem as if this were the first revelation of God under the title, Jehovah. He had made Himself known to the patriarchs as God Almighty, the All-sufficient, who possesses all wisdom, power, and dominion, to contrive and execute the purposes of His love ; but as Jehovah, the Self-existent, was He not known. And yet we find Moses had used this name in the preceding history. The patriarchs had raised their altars, and called on the name of Jehovah ; and we find Abraham even calling the place where he was about to sacrifice Isaac, "Jehovah-jireh."

Under this difficulty, some commentators propose to read the text, "But by my name, Jehovah, was I not known to them," interrogatively, thus—"And by my name, Jehovah, was I not known to them?" meaning, By this name was I not also known to them? Others think the text is sufficiently explained, by supposing that, although the patriarchs

knew the name, Jehovah, they did not know it in this meaning ; namely, the self-existent, eternal, unchangeable God.

The first discovery of the name, "I Am," which signifies the Divine Eternity, as well as Immutability, was for the comfort of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt (Ex. iii. 14, 15). It was then published from the burning bush as "strong consolation" to these afflicted ones. And it has not yet lost its power, nor ever shall, in any of the sorrows that ever have befallen, or shall befall, the Church of Christ. It shall be as a wall, on the right hand and on the left, against the waves which may buffet us as we pass through this troublesome world. It is a consolation as durable as the God whose name it is. He is still, "I Am ;" and the same to the Church now as then. Yea, it may be said, the spiritual Israel have a greater right to it than the mere carnal Israel. No oppression can be greater than that which the true Israel suffers from the enemy of souls : and the God who

sustained them can also comfort us ; for, you observe (Ex. iii. 15), it was not a temporary name—but “ a name for ever, a memorial unto all generations.”

But when we come to think upon this name, “ I Am,” that it means Him who was, and is, and is to come—that it includes a past, as well as future, eternity—the mind is lost. The meaning is extremely vague. It is so vast and incomprehensible. The very notion of eternity is difficult. As Austin said of time, “ If no man will ask me the question what time is, I know well enough what it is ; but if any man ask me what it is, I know not how to explain it.” So of eternity. And, indeed, to a finite mind, it is difficult to conceive of eternity. To think that God always was, and always is, and always will be, what He is ;—that so far from any change coming upon Him, not even the shadow of it can fall upon Him. He is the eternal “ I Am.”

He tells us *what* He is ; for we read, “ God

is a Spirit." He tells us also *where* He is ; for we read, "Heaven is my throne." And also, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." But *how* He is, or *why* He is, we are not told ; but simply that He is as He is, and wills to be.

Yes ! "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." "The same," as says the Psalmist—"Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end."

While man is constantly changing—not the same to-day that he was yesterday, or that he will be to-morrow ; not the same at night that he was in the morning ; something is gone, something is added :—God is the same He was from everlasting, and as He will be to everlasting. He receives nothing ; He loses nothing. "His years fail not ;" that is, they do not come and go as others do. But His day is like Himself, "the same yesterday, and to-

day, and for ever." This is scarcely conceivable by us living in time, where everything is passing and fading—where the day has scarcely dawned before the shadows of evening are closing upon us—where each step we take, the ground is, as it were, crumbling beneath us, and gradually, but surely lowering us, into our grave—where what we love and delight in to-day, is to-morrow numbered with the things that are gone. That there should be a state of things changeless, fixed, immutable, eternal, is scarcely conceivable by us. Eternity is to time what the ocean is to a river. The ocean never changes its place, but continues ever the same; ever receiving, ever absorbing, but still continuing the same; whereas rivers glide along, "never continuing in one stay," and are at length swallowed up in the ocean. So eternity is constantly receiving and engulphing time with all its solemnities; but itself continues ever the same.

But although the subject of God's eternity

is a deep, and mysterious, and incomprehensible one ; very much of the comfort of the Christian hangs upon it as a blessed truth.

For instance, 1. If God were not eternal, He could not be *immutable* ; and then what becomes of *the security of the Church* ? For it is on “the immutability of His counsel” that the “strong consolation” of the believer hinges. Take away God’s immutability, and we have no security. For whatever has a beginning, undergoes a change in passing from what it was not, to what it becomes ; and if God had not been eternal, He had a beginning ; and thus was not immutable ; and so, in passing from nothing to what He is, there would have been the greatest change ; and a change of *being* is even greater than a change of *purpose*. But if God be eternal, then change is impossible. “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. iii. 6). Yes ! God is a sun, always shining in His full meridian glory. There is no rising nor setting. His

eternity defends us from all risk of change. He is as immutable as He is eternal, and His word as sure as His existence.

But this immutability, which is an attribute of God, we must not regard as rendering Him indifferent to, or uninterested in, the concerns or trials of His creatures. On the contrary, it greatly increases His concern in them. That which He is interested in to-day, He was always interested in, as having foreseen it, as an object of interest, from eternity. This is a wonderful thought ; that your trial, which has just burst forth from the womb of events, which you are just beginning to feel, which is just stirring the surface of your soul, and beginning to exercise it, has been all along foreknown of God ! Its weight, its pressure, its effect, has been accurately gauged. It has a specific object, pre-determined and pre-arranged, by which God means to do you good at your latter end. But if God were not eternal, there were then something before Him which might

thwart and overthrow His purposes of love towards you!

We are deeply interested in the eternity of God, were it only for the immutability of His purposes of love to us.

2. But if God were not eternal, He could not be *infinitely perfect*, and then what becomes of *the happiness of the Church*? To be finite and limited, in any particular, is a great imperfection. He could not be a perfect being if He were not always so, and would not for ever remain so. And if He were not a perfect being, He could not be infinitely happy; for whatever perfections He had would be saddened by the knowledge that they would come to an end. But He is "blessed from everlasting to everlasting." Are *we* not interested in the eternity of God, when we think of what is written, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them?" "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My

glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Is Christ's glory our glory? Is Christ's blessedness our blessedness? Is it no matter of interest to us that this blessedness should be perfect and eternal? Most truly are we deeply interested in knowing that our God is the very and eternal "I Am." Otherwise, the tears which He is one day to wipe away might fall again, and our hearts be burdened with irremediable sorrow. But God's eternity secures us from all fear, and our happiness will be perfect and eternal because God's is so.

3. Again, if God were not eternal He could not be *Almighty*, and then what becomes of *the defence of the Church*? The title of Almighty belongs not to a nature that had a beginning. Whatever had a beginning was once nothing; and as such could do nothing: for where there is no being there is no power. Neither does the title Almighty belong to one whose nature is

perishable. Such an one could not preserve himself either from outward enemies or inward decay. Hence we read (Isa. ii. 22), "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" as much as to say, no account is to be made of man because his breath is in his nostrils; and were it not alike applicable to God, if He were perishable? Yes! He could not properly be said to be Almighty if He were not always Almighty—eternally Almighty. Hence we find God's eternity and Almightyness joined by the Holy Ghost (Rev. i. 8), "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Say, then, when we think of the strength, and malice, and subtlety of our enemies; and the pitiless way in which they would crush us, but for the strength of the "stronger than he"—Are we not interested in the eternity of God? for thus only are we assured

that He is Almighty, and thus only can we be assured that no enemy shall ever pluck us out of His hands. When I commit myself to the care of one who is Almighty, I need fear no evil. God's eternity assures me that I have a friend "who loveth at all times," and is older than my oldest enemy—that, in making me His own, He will make me infinitely happy, and keep me safe from all evil for ever and ever.

Now, the same title which God uses of Himself in my text, is claimed by Christ (John viii. 58), "Before Abraham was, I Am." It is said of Him also, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). He is thus immutable. If eternity be the property of God, then Christ is God; for this property is ascribed to Him. "He is before all things"—that is, all *created* things. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things

were created by him and for him" (Col. i. 16). Again, Christ speaks of a glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world; that is, when there was no creature in being. Again (Isa. ix. 6), He is called "The mighty God"—"The everlasting Father." Not the Father in the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, but the Father of many nations, the everlasting Father of His seed.

But I need not dwell on this point; for just as the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, so the eternity of Christ is the ground of the Christian religion. Our sins could not have been perfectly expiated by one who had not an *eternal divinity*, to answer for the offences committed against an eternal God. The sufferings of one *not divine* could be of little value against the wrath of an eternal God; and so we read, "The Church of God was purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28).

My reason for thus speaking on the eternity of God is, that you may better under-

stand the blessings God has in store for you, to be enjoyed through all eternity. My desire is, that you may know that your God is a God who loves with an “*everlasting* love,” and sustains with “*everlasting* arms;” that your refuge is an *eternal* God; and that His care for you hath flourished from *eternity*. I desire that, when you hear of Him as “Jehovah-jireh,” you may feel you have One who not only has made an *eternal* provision for you, but a provision for *your eternity*: That, when you hear of Him as “Jehovah-tsidkenu,” you may understand you have in Him a righteousness which can endure the scrutiny of God; that it is *everlasting* righteousness; and that it is in this you shall be accepted, and so stand faultless before the throne of God, through *all eternity*: That, when you hear of Him as “Jehovah-shalom,” you may be assured of receiving from Him His own peace—“The peace of God which passeth all understanding,” and which, like His own, shall endure through *all eternity*:

That, when you here of him as "Jehovah-nissi," you may regard Him not merely as One who has won an *everlasting* victory for you over your most deadly foes, but as One under whose banner and captainship you too shall fight, and conquer, and win a victory *for eternity*: That, when you here of Him as "Jehovah-shammah," you may understand that you are to dwell in the city in which God is the everlasting light; and whence you shall no more go out for *all eternity*. Here is our comfort—God is eternal. What He has to give is eternal. Oh! remember God's spiritual blessings are, like Himself, eternal—not temporary, or fading, or fleeting, but such as endure. This is the real value of the Gospel, that it is an "everlasting Gospel." Were its blessings but for a time, however long, men might be excused for neglecting it, as of itself it would one day terminate; but since it is *for ever! for ever!! for ever!!!* what folly and madness to despise it! For surely, the eternity of God

should be as great a terror to them that despise Him, as it is a comfort to those that love Him. And to the wicked, on whom the weight of His arm will fall, His eternity should be a greater terror even than *His power*. For while His power can make His punishment *sharp*, His eternity can make it *perpetual*; and, as one says, “Ever to endure, is the sting at the end of every lash.”

There is another thought, in connexion with God’s eternity, which should make us tremble, and that is, that sins committed long ago—though past with us, and but dimly remembered, if not altogether forgotten—are, in respect of God’s eternity, *still present before Him*. All things are before God at once, and our earliest sins stand side by side before Him, with those committed this moment. “A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Ought not this to keep our penitence alive and fresh before Him? and make us ever live, as it were, upon the brink

of that "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness?" And if we have never repented of our sins, and have never been forgiven—and if we once did shudder at them, though time has worn away the anguish they once caused—remember no length of time can wash away *their guilt*; they stand before the Lord in all their heinousness—it is Christ's blood alone that can remove their stain. Flee, then, to this blood at once; and then, instead of bearing the weight of God's wrath to all eternity, He will bless you with "an eternal weight of glory."

Let me conclude with a word of comfort from the subject. If God be thus eternal, what consolation for those who are in covenant with Him, who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, even by the sacrifice of Christ! It is "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And the oath by which God has confirmed it is His own life—for, "because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself" (Heb.

vi. 13); and it shall never be disannulled, for it is the fruit of immutable counsel. Besides, the covenant stands fast with Christ, in whom all His people are included. "This is the promise which He has promised us, even eternal life." And this promise, like all others, is "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." And the promise is as old as Himself; it was "promised before the world began," before we needed it. It has anticipated all our wants. Oh! think of the nature of the promise—not a fading one, but eternal; so that we can say of it, as of nothing else, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Let a man take hold of this promise, and then he can say, "Soul, take thine ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Oh! our happiness cannot perish so long as God lives. And how long shall that be? Is He the *First*? Has He ever been alive? He is also the *Last*! He shall ever be alive! Your joy shall know no change. It shall be perpetual, yet without

satiety. It shall be secure, and free from all apprehension. We shall not then, as now, regret the joys that are gone ; nor linger over the present, because it will soon fade ; nor long for the future with impatience. Oh ! it will, indeed, be joyful, joyful ! A heart running over with love—the tears all wiped away—all sorrow done with. When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon us, it will never set again. It will be one long, bright, and inextinguishable day. There will be constantly fresh delights ; but all emanating from, as well as centering in, our God. There will be a perpetual spring of blessing, of which no winter shall ever rob us ; for as God has infinite power to impart joy, so has He an eternity in which to perpetuate it. Come then, dear brethren, in our deepest sorrows, let us lift up our heads. “The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” The great “I Am” is on our side. We are weak, but He is strong ; our enemies are mighty, but our

God, that dwelleth on high, is mightier ; and remember, “this God is our God for ever and ever : He will be our guide unto death.” Therefore, let us “trust and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song ; He also is become our salvation.” “Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

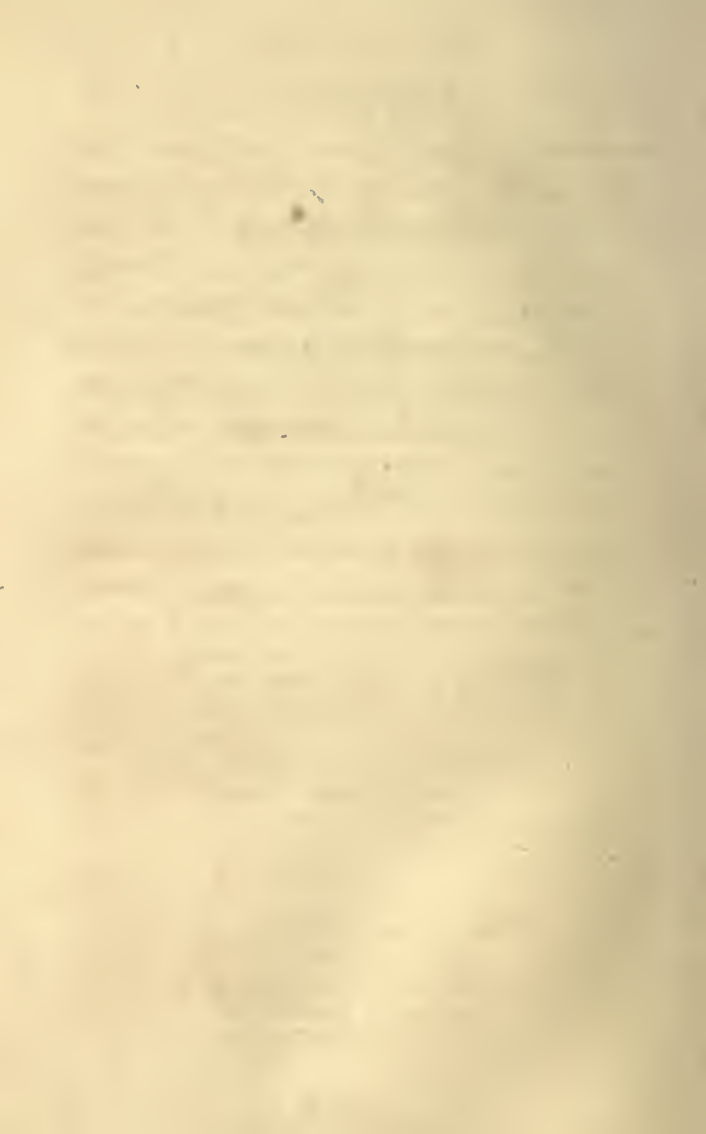
JEHOVAH-JIREH.

My life's a shade! My days
Apace to death decline;
My Lord, He's life; He'll raise
This flesh again, e'en mine.
Sweet truth to me,
I shall arise,
And with these eyes
My Saviour see.

I've said sometimes with tears,
"Ah me! I'm loth to die;"
Lord! silence Thou these fears,
My life's with Thee on high.
Sweet truth, &c.

My Lord, His angels shall
Their golden trumpets sound,
At whose most welcome call
My grave shall be unbound.
Sweet truth, &c.

Then welcome, harmless grave,
By thee to heaven I'll go;
My Lord, His death shall save
Me from the flames below.
Sweet truth, &c.



LECTURE II.

GOD'S PROVISION.

GENESIS xxii. 14.

“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

OUR subject this morning is Jehovah-jireh, the meaning of which, as the margin teaches, is, “the Lord will see, or provide;” and before we proceed to illustrate it, in God’s dealings with His Church, it would be well to review the circumstances under which the place was so named. This will lead us to look at Abraham’s trial as given in this chapter. I need not read it; it is familiar, in terms at least, to you. I would particu-

larly direct your attention to the principle by which Abraham was actuated in this transaction—a principle without which “it is impossible to please God”—without which Abraham’s conduct is scarcely better than murder ; but, accompanied by which, it obtained for him the honourable appellation of “the Father of the Faithful.” We are not left in doubt as to what this principle was ; for we read, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.”

As we proceed, you will observe how this blessed principle pervades the whole of this marvellous transaction, and gives to it a meaning of the very highest moment. It was no common trial—a father called to sacrifice a son. It was one we cannot at all realise—we can none of us understand it. The anguish of that three days’ journey—the thoughts that passed through the heart of the patriarch—the surging fears that at times overwhelmed his mind, and the calm trust in God which again hushed the angry

waves. I say it was no common trial : not only as it respected the parental feelings of the old man, but as it respected the hopes which were bound up in Isaac.

It was not merely offering up his son ; for heathen men have been able to do this—“have given their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.” It was not merely doing as he was told to do, for many have done this in a spirit of sullen obedience, because they were afraid to disobey ; but it was offering up him “of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called, and he that had received the promise offered up his only-begotten son” (Heb. xi. 17, 18). This was the strength of the trial, that the only-begotten son, in whom his seed was to be called, on whom the promises depended, should be sacrificed. But this was the point in which faith triumphed—where it shewed its superiority to sight, to reason, to human probability. It was to Abraham “the evi-

dence of things not seen," in spite of what he did see. What Abraham, as a natural man, saw, was the death of his only-begotten son, and the consequent extinction of every hope connected with the promised seed. What Abraham, as a believer, saw, was the fulfilment of God's promise in spite of all that seemed to be against it. He saw, not Isaac dead, but an ever-living God faithful to His word.

Had he listened to human counsels, what strong things might have been said to hinder his obedience—what plausible objections might have been made! What might not the flesh have urged? "You are about to cast away, by this act, every hope God has taught you to cherish. You are cutting from under your feet the very ground on which you stand." But it mattered not to Abraham. Like Paul, "he conferred not with flesh and blood." God was the same He ever had been, and Abraham's faith did not waver. God had never ordered him to

do anything but what was right and good. He had proved Him often, and he felt that the Almighty God who had been his "shield" hitherto, would, in this dark dispensation, if he were faithful, be his "exceeding great reward." We read of no hesitation, no expression of regret, no delay, but instant preparation for instant obedience; and, "early in the morning," Abraham departed on his trying journey. Although the dispensation was unspeakably painful and dark, yet the shadow of it seems in no way to have rested either on his heart or his faith. It might seem to human thought, that what God commanded him to do was inconsistent with what God had promised—yea, more, that if carried out, it would render the promise impossible; but he left it all. He did not reason, but he trusted—"against hope he believed in hope." He rested simply on God's promise. This was the thing! God promised, Abraham believed—God commanded, Abraham obeyed. Now certainly,

the faith which could stand such a test, is no mere exercise of human resolution. It is the fruit of the Spirit, the gift of God ; and it is the noblest instance on record of unshaken trust in God's word of promise when appearances seemed to be so much against it.

But now that we have seen how strong Abraham's faith was, what mountains it removed, there is another thing that occurs, and that is—*what did Abraham believe?* What was the particular point on which his mind was fixed, which imparted such dauntless courage to his faith ?

Paul gives us the clue (Heb. xi. 19)—Abraham accounted “that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead ; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

Again (Rom. iv. 17), it is probably said with reference to this same trial, that He whom Abraham believed, was “God that quickeneth the dead.”

But it may be asked, What kind of a resurrection was this for which Abraham

looked ? Was it a return to this present life only ? Was it like that of the raising of Lazarus ? or like that which filled the mind of Martha, when, in reply to our Lord's assurance, "Thy brother shall rise again," she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day ?" (John xi. 24.) I need not say that such a resurrection was the especial hope of the people of Israel. Paul pleads it before Agrippa, and calls it "*the* hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." And that this was Abraham's hope, is confirmed by Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13, 16, where it is said, that "Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country." Why ? "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." So of the patriarchs—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off ; and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things,

declare plainly that they seek a country." And after pointing out, that it was not the country from whence they came that they desired, Paul adds, but "a better country, that is, an heavenly." Do not these scriptures teach us, that what Abraham relied on, was not merely the power of God to raise the dead—but more especially, God's power to fulfil His promise in reference to the resurrection to the inheritance of the life to come? Undoubtedly. They teach us that the patriarchs' hopes were not bounded by the earthly Canaan, but that they looked for a land which is the very "glory of all lands;" where "the King shall be seen in His beauty."

It is interesting, no less than assuring, to see, that as there is but "one Lord and one Spirit," so is there but "one faith" in all the Church of God; and that although the thing promised, may stand out with more clearness under one dispensation than another, yet the thing realised is ever the same, viz., the re-

turn of the soul to the presence of God, and seeing Him face to face for ever.

But there is another passage of the New Testament which throws light on this point. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." What day was this? No doubt, the day of Christ's sojourn on earth. That which He means, when He says, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day;" when He glorified His Father, and "finished the work which He had given Him to do." The whole period of Christ's humiliation, and especially that which crowned it all—His resurrection—is this day. This seems a privilege, granted peculiarly to Abraham. The patriarchs, as we have seen, walked as strangers and pilgrims, and declared plainly they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly. They lived by faith in a Saviour, but Abraham saw more clearly—he saw Christ's day. And where did he see this most clearly? Where, but on the mount in offering up his son?

There he saw in vivid reality the typical details of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, the general result of which alone was then communicated to others.

And if, as many think, Mount Moriah is the very spot, subsequently called the Hill of Calvary, it is the more striking. The laying his son upon the altar, and stretching forth his hand to slay him, represented not merely the sacrifice of the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God; but he was thus able more deeply to *feel how great that love* which “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” He himself represents the Father in the very act of causing the sword of Divine justice to fall upon the Son of His love. Again, the ram, provided in Isaac’s place, puts before us the grand principle of the gospel—substitution. A ransom is found for those who otherwise must have died. And in the reception of Isaac again, as it were, from the dead (not, however, without sacrifice), we see the resurrection of the

Son of God, and His return to the bosom of the Father.

What, then, was vouchsafed to Abraham, in the midst of this very heavy trial, was a more glad insight into the resurrection state and the eternal world. He saw that God's promises reach beyond this life, and have their chief fulfilment in the life to come. He saw that the birthright of which Isaac was the heir, belongs not in its completeness to this world, but to the world to come; when patience shall have had her perfect work, and faith shall fully inherit the promise.

And is it not so with us now? Are we ever called to give up an Isaac, without having something better promised in its stead? And do we ever yield, in meek submissiveness to the will of God, without seeing, in the character and faithfulness of God, the assurance of something better, when God's purpose is complete? What it is, may not be revealed so clearly as it was to Abraham; nor may we ever receive our Isaac back again in

this lifetime ; that ray of sunshine may be dimmed for ever ; but we know who has said, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's ; but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life."

Thus we see Abraham's faith was upborne on the great truths of the atonement and the resurrection—the same that support your faith and mine, when we are called to trial ; and these spring particularly from "*the day of Christ*." We may be called—nay, many of us have been called—to give up those we tenderly love ; around whom shone many a bright hope for years to come. But the hope withered. The flower faded. It was a bitter parting. It was hard to say, "God's will be done." But what sustains the soul at such an hour ? Why, the blood that *cleanses*, and

the resurrection that shall *restore*. Yes ! let the once bright beaming face be mingled with the dust—we may say, “Whom I love is not there ; the Lord has provided better.” And by the way in which our spirit rises, as it were, after that which is gone—by the way in which our forlorn heart quits for a time this earth, and dwells on things above, Christ calls us to that heaven where He now dwells, and where He has provided places of rest for us. Well might Abraham call the place “Jehovah-jireh ;”—what he had learned there was abundantly enough to enable him to cast all his care upon God. “The Lord will provide.” The Lord did provide as Abraham little expected, and as you and I can but faintly hope.

But the great lesson is this, that we must not view our trials, or judge of them in the dim light of the present *night-scene*, but in the brightness of eternity, the inextinguishable *day*. “What I do, thou knowest not now,” is written upon all God’s dispensations ;

but faith assures us, no less certainly, “we shall know hereafter.” What we are to learn is not confined to this dying scene. Trials are intended to teach for heaven. It is thus they “work together for good;” yea, a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, *while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”

We do not estimate God’s provision aright, unless we include eternity. The extreme poverty we see on the one hand, and the unbounded wealth on the other—the wasting sickness, and the radiant health—the incessant trial, and the unclouded prosperity—the excessive labour, and the unwholesome indolence—all perplex us if we do not include eternity. But when we are enabled to realise this great thought, then these tiny inequalities of earth vanish from our view; and we may cradle ourselves in the blessed truth, that the Eternal God, who is our refuge, has eternally provided the path, and the portion—the ways, and the means—by and through

which His children shall come to a "city of habitation."

I need not attempt to specify the particulars in which God has provided. He has done so blessedly and abundantly. We see it in our "creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;" but, above all, "in His inestimable love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, in the means of grace, and in the hope of glory." What have we really wanted, as we have come along life's path thus far, which God has not graciously provided and put before us? Who of you can charge Him with a single omission?

Look through the universe, and see how He provides for all! From the least to the greatest of His creatures, "He filleth all things living with plenteousness." You have, no doubt, *desired* many things which He has withheld; but this was because you did not really want them—because to have had them would have done you harm—and so the Lord

provided better than your desires. For, you know, we read of some to whom "He gave their heart's desires, but sent leanness into their souls."

But, especially, if Mount Moriah be the Hill of Calvary, how strikingly do we see the text fulfilled—"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen"—how God is "Jehovah-jireh!"

Dear brethren, many may be our wants; but they all dwindle into nothing by the side of the wants of the soul. Think of the provision made on Calvary. Man has no wants so deep and dreadful as those connected *with sin*; and man has no provision comparable to the blood of Christ. This was, like Himself, an *eternal* provision. "The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world." It is also *eternal* in its results. It has purchased an *everlasting* remission of sin—an *eternal* inheritance—*everlasting* blessedness—an "*eternal* weight of glory." It is a provision rich and precious enough to

obliterate for ever God's view of the evil of sin, as respects all His children. It was ample enough to meet all man's need. The fragrance of that blood can not only neutralise the vileness of man's sins, but render the sinner acceptable before God; for, washed in that blood, he is white as snow. Dwell on the *extent* of this provision. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin." As we are graciously taught to pray for the forgiveness of *our trespasses*—not some, but *all* of them—so it shews there is no limit to the cleansing power of Christ's blood. All transgressions, however deep or heinous, are to it but as a drop of water to the ocean—never seen again when once brought into contact with that mass of waters. It is called "a plenteous redemption," since it redeems "Israel from all his iniquities."

Let, then, no one be dejected who is really giving himself to Christ. If one such be here—think, the blood that has cleansed so many from *all sin*, from *such* sins, and *such*

multitudes of them, can surely cleanse you from all yours, were they as numerous as all those that have been cleansed since the foundation of the world. What is to hinder its doing in your person what it has done in so many others? It is quite true, when we think of our sins, our pride, lust, vanity, falsehood, &c., and all our abominations, we may well be cast down; but when we look to the cross of Christ—when we think of “Jehovah-jireh,” and remember that in the mount of the Lord this is particularly seen—then we may take heart again. And as we have seen the blessed sun disperse and roll away the mists of the valley, and disclose a scene of quietness, beauty, and peace, so will the clouds and darkness, which at times overspread our souls, be broken and dispersed, when we remember what our Jehovah has said, “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins,” and “I will not remember thy sins.” And consider, dear brethren, with respect to 1 John

i. 7, there is comfort not only in the words, but in the very grammar of the sentence there is blessing. Observe, the present tense “cleanseth from all sin;” not, *hath* cleansed only, or *will* cleanse, but does it *now*—*cleanseth to-day*, as it did yesterday; and to-morrow, as it does to-day. Christ’s blood is called (Heb. x. 20) “a new and living way.” The word rendered “new,” signifies newly slain or sacrificed, to shew its unchanging and incorruptible value. It is called “living,” too, to shew its fresh and efficacious vigour, as if shed but this moment.

I have dwelt on the provision of this blood, because it is the pledge of all we need besides (Rom. viii. 32). Having this, who needs anything else by comparison? Having this, in its full savour and power on the soul, who longs for anything else? who will not say, God has provided abundantly? Having this blood as our own, who will not say with Paul, “I have all things, and abound?” Yes! it satisfies the soul. And it is just

in proportion as we are ignorant of this provision that we hanker after and covet other things. It is just as we are far from this blood that we are far from peace, and so ever longing for something which we think we need. "Jesus and the resurrection" are God's grand provision: having made sure of these by faith, we may be at peace. We can afford then to let go the world, and the things of it—its fashions, its follies, its bitterness, and its heart-burnings—its fading honours, and its small ambitions; for we have then the prospect of sitting with saints to "judge angels and the world," and to share the glory of our risen Lord.

Have you thus secured by faith, "Jesus and the resurrection?" Then you may say with respect to all else, "Jehovah-jireh"—"All things are yours."

Jesus made this provision for you at an inexpressible amount of suffering. Are you content to enjoy this provision in the path of suffering? It is needful to "suffer with

Him, that you may also be glorified together."

He calls on you to live upon the hope of being with Him hereafter. Are you content to have *all* your hope *there* and *there alone*? Can you bear to *wait*? to have your portion postponed, your expectation deferred, till the hour when eternity shall burst upon you? Can you resign all to Him without a murmur—your own peculiar Isaac? Can you take up your cross daily—yea, a fresh cross daily, "if needs be?" Can you do this meekly as becomes the gospel, conscious that you need discipline, and happy that God calls you to trial rather than not deal with you at all? Can you do this, welcoming all as from a loving Father's hand, who has a favour unto you; not receiving trial in a kind of dogged spirit of mere endurance, indifferent alike to the cause and its results—but, like Abraham, in a firm reliance on a faithful, eternal, immutable, loving God? Can you? Then may God

speed you on your way! May His sunshine be in your hearts, His freedom on your wing. Your comfort may be "Jehovah-jireh;" but never, never forget it is in the mount of the Lord that this is seen.

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU.

JESUS, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies ;
E'en then shall this be all my plea,
"Jesus hath lived and died for me."

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay ?
Fully, through Thee, absolved I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Thus Abraham the friend of God,
Thus all the armies bought with blood,
Saviour of sinners, Thee proclaim,
Sinners, of whom the chief I am.

This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruin'd nature sinks in years ;
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new.

Oh, let the dead now hear Thy voice,
Now bid Thy banish'd ones rejoice :
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness.

LECTURE III.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 6.

“And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.”

OUR last lecture was on “Jehovah-jireh,” and the rich provision He has made in the death and resurrection of Christ—how by His death He made a perfect atonement for sin, and proved the acceptance of His work by His resurrection from the dead.

We have now to consider Him as “Jehovah-tsidkenu,” The Lord our righteousness; and we may regard this as no less a part of the eternal and gracious provision made for sinners in redemption. For if, in redeeming

lost sinners, it was necessary that a *perfect atonement* should be made for the transgressions of God's holy law, it was also not less necessary that that law should be perfectly kept, for it is only "the man that doeth these things that shall live by them." And although we read (Acts xx. 28) that the Church of God was "purchased with His own blood," yet it was by an *obedience unto death*. The terms of the agreement were, "I come to do Thy will; yea, Thy law is within My heart." And amongst other prophetic declarations of our Lord it is said, He should "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24). And you will remember that, in Isaiah xlii. 21, the Lord is represented as being "well-pleased for His righteousness' sake." Why? Because "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable," by His perfect obedience to it. This is a subject that demands our closest attention, for the doctrine of the righteousness of God, accounted to us by faith, is questioned by

many, and indistinctly held by many who do not question it.

It is not difficult to conceive that a righteousness, which could be accepted by a holy God, must be perfect, having no defect; and that no one could come into His presence who was not thus furnished, because we read, "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Then the question arises, How can man—stained with sin as he is, the imaginations of the thoughts of whose heart are only evil continually—appear before God? In himself he is hopelessly lost; for, being a sinner, he can never of himself rise above his nature, but must remain what he is. In this misery, comes in "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" with the doctrine of the text, confirmed as it is by various other parts of Scripture. We shall see Jehovah-Jesus has not only atoned for sin, but has "brought in" a righteousness which, accounted to us by faith, covers all our sins; and arrayed in which, we may stand "fault-

less before the throne of God with exceeding joy."

I propose, therefore, to consider—

I. WHOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS THIS IS.

II. WHAT IS SAID OF IT.

III. HOW IT BECOMES OURS.

I. WHOSE RIGHTEOUSNESS THIS IS.

In its primary meaning, I cannot doubt this text has an especial reference to the Jews, and their return to their own land; but whatever may be their particular privileges as connected with that event, all believers are now "partakers of the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. ii. 12), and are, from the testimony of Paul, at liberty to lay hold of such a text as this. It is ours, then, as well as theirs; and although, when they shall receive it and make it their own by faith, it will be like "life from the dead" to all who are on earth, yet let us make it ours *now*—anticipate, as it were, the blessing, and rise triumphant into that blessedness which

God gives to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In my first lecture I shewed you that Jesus Christ is God—that He is Jehovah-Jesus. It is He who is spoken of in the text. Now, the righteousness which you and I require, in order to be accepted of God, must be the righteousness of God. It is always so spoken of by Paul; and, indeed, it must necessarily be the righteousness of God, or it could not be accounted to us. For no mere creature has any righteousness which could be accounted to another, much less any to impart. When God made man upright, He did not give to Adam more righteousness than he needed wherewith to glorify God. You and I have no righteousness at all, in consequence of the Fall; therefore, if we do not obtain righteousness from God, we cannot have it at all. What man requires for his justification before God, is a righteousness equal to the demands of God's holy law. That law is revealed, to shew us

the extent of the obedience God requires; and the more we study it, and compare our obedience with it, the more we must see our miserable shortcomings and consequent exposure to condemnation. We must, therefore, obtain a righteousness, or we can have no title to heaven.

For when a sinner has been forgiven all his sins by the blood of Christ, and the door of heaven has been set open by the resurrection of Christ, there comes a consideration—What right and title has the pardoned sinner to the kingdom of heaven? To have our debts paid, and to be let out of gaol, is one thing; to have a fine estate given to us is another. To be forgiven all our sin, and so delivered from the condemnation of the law, is one thing; to be justified, and so to have our persons accepted before God, and thus to have a right to enter into glory, is another. Not that pardon and justification are ever separated in the economy of God's salvation—not that a pardoned man is ever shut out

of heaven; but the ideas of forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons, are distinct. The ideas of deliverance from condemnation, and a title to heaven, are distinct; and as God has seen fit to make provision for them both, it becomes us to understand them. I may be forgiven all my iniquities, and there may stand before me the enjoyments of my Father's house; but if I have no right to enter in, my happiness is very incomplete. You remember an illustration of this in the case of Absalom (2 Sam. xiv. 28). To be pardoned, and allowed to return from Geshur to Jerusalem, was all well, so far as it went; but to be there two years, and not to be allowed to see the king's face, or enter his father's house, was more than he could bear; and so he set Joab's barley-field on fire, in order to force him to bring the matter before the king, for, as he says, "Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still." It was intolerable not

to see his father; he felt his pardon was incomplete. It was not like forgiveness at all, to be thus held at arm's length. And should we not all feel this, were God to say, "I forgive you, but you shall never see My face—shall never come where I dwell—never sit down at My table?" We should all, at least if we loved God, feel this to be very short of what we longed for. And yet bear with me if I remind you, that this is the sort of forgiveness which many people content themselves with extending to others. They say, "Oh! I quite forgive; I have no ill feeling; but I will not see him again; I will have nothing more to do with him." But is this hearty forgiveness? Is it forgiveness at all? Is it what would satisfy them, were they truly sorry for having offended? and especially in the case of God and heaven? They should remember that they pray to be forgiven *as* (in the same way as) they forgive others.

But God's reconciliation is not thus incom-

plete. He has provided, not only that sinners may be forgiven their iniquity, but that their persons may be accepted also; that they may not only be received into His house, but into His heart, and be to Him as dear children for ever. Do we ask how? Through faith in Jesus Christ, and the office of "Jehovah-tsidkenu."

We read (Rev. xxii. 14), "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." We see the right and title consist in obedience to God's commandments. Now, the question is, What righteousness can we find in the world capable of bearing the scrutiny of an all-seeing God? Not our own, certainly; for we read, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." But here comes in the provision of "Jehovah-tsidkenu." Christ has rendered a perfect obedience to God's holy law, and thus brought in "*everlasting righteousness*." Here is a title to heaven in every

way complete. It is a title infinite and everlasting. And as the infinite merit of His death could atone for infinite transgressions, and redeem souls from death everlasting, so the *infinite merit* of *His obedience* secures a righteousness of everlasting and infinite efficacy.

We see, then, the only righteousness which can meet the demand of God's holy law, and thus secure a title to everlasting life, is the righteousness of *Jesus*. He has left nothing undone needful for His Father's honour and His people's salvation. The blood He shed is *perfect*; the righteousness He wrought out is *perfect*; the heaven He has purchased is *perfect*; and the happiness He confers is *perfect*. It is every way worthy of Him as God, and in every way blessed for us as *sinner*s. And this leads me to notice,

II. WHAT IS SAID OF THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is *our* righteousness! We may inquire, Who are the favoured possessors of this

righteousness? To whom does it belong? It is my privilege to say, To *you*, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes! this infinite—everlasting—perfect—all-sufficient righteousness is the portion of the least of the little ones that believe in Jesus. What though your faith be feeble, if only it be real? “The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. iii. 22). What though you may be vile and worthless—yea, have been the vilest of the vile? what though your sins have been as scarlet, and your transgressions have grown up into the heavens? what though, “from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in you?”—yea, so corrupt are you, as to be abominable in the sight of God—so lost to all spirituality, as to be accounted “*dead* in trespasses and sins:” still, quickened and made alive by the Holy Spirit of God; washed and made clean by the blood of Christ; attired in the white robe of Christ’s

righteousness, which covers all your defects ; though vile in yourself, and black as the tents of Kedar,—you will be comely in Christ ; comely with the beauty which He puts upon you, and may take your place at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Now, these considerations shew that Jesus must be Jehovah. If He were not, He could not be *our righteousness*. As a mere creature He could merit nothing, because He would owe to God all He could do ; and after He had done all, be only an unprofitable servant. But as He is God, all He has done, He has done voluntarily ; and His divinity stamps an infinite value on His work, so that it may well avail not only for Himself, but also for a ruined world.

Such is the dignity of our blessed Lord ! He is Jehovah—one with the Father ; in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal ! Nor is there one ransomed soul in heaven who does not ascribe salvation to the blood and righteousness of this our Incarnate God ! Does

not this subject unfold more of God's love in the gift of Jesus Christ? Do you not feel your love to Him kindling more, as you recall what great things He has done for you? That this righteousness—infinite in extent, perfect in its purity, everlasting in its efficacy—is all made over to the sinner that believes; that henceforth God sees *him* in this righteousness; sees him “complete in Christ”—“accepted in the beloved;” sees him in “the best robe”—fit to take his place at his Father's table. What should be the language of our hearts when we contemplate our privileges? “Not unto us, O Lord—not unto us! but unto Thy name give praise, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake.”

III. HOW DOES THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS BECOME OURS?

By faith; by that mysterious principle which unites the soul to Christ. The faith which secures an interest in the merits of *His blood*, secures also the merits of His righteousness.

We distinctly read, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 21). "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). And then, "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 22). And again, "Christ is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 3). This is what Paul means (Phil. iii. 8, 9)—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Oh, how wonderful the *power of faith*, to secure to us such blessings! How wonderful

the *goodness of God!* to confer heaven on such terms! But so it is! Real, simple, childlike faith is the thing required! And faith is as necessary in an *instrumental* way, as Christ is, in a *meritorious* way. Christ purchased the pardon of our sins by His own blood, but faith alone puts us in possession of that pardon. Hence we are always said to be “justified by faith.” It is not said that “faith justifies,” lest we should mistake the instrumentality for the meritorious cause. We are justified by faith—in whom? Verily, in Christ. So with regard to righteousness, our title to heaven; faith is not our righteousness, but faith secures to us the righteousness of God! Thus we are made the righteousness of God in Him, and have a title to everlasting blessedness. What a mercy is this way of salvation! Just think, if you were told that you must work out a righteousness of your own equal to the demands of God’s law—who dare indulge a hope of attaining it? That there should be no act in your life, no

word in your tongue, no movement in your heart, your mind, your feelings, your desires, your imaginations—no defect of purity in motive, spirit, or object, in all you do and are, through all your life. The best man on earth would sink down in despair; but now, in God's gracious way, the *worst* man *need not* despair. The righteousness of Jehovah appears not only equal to our wants, but to the wants of all mankind; and by trusting to Him really, we find strength, and peace, and glory.

Nor could any way of acceptance be so honourable to God, since we find it refers all the glory to Him; and we find the hosts in heaven ascribing the glory of salvation wholly to Him. Nor could any way be devised which should more effectually conduce to holiness; for the Cross attracts the heart—Christ's love in dying secures the believer's affections. It makes sin hateful; and in proportion as we love Christ, shall we hate sin, and holiness will be the atmosphere in which the believer loves to dwell. He desires to

serve and honour God, and strives hard for it in the path of holiness and obedience. Let the world say what it may about such a mode of preaching the gospel tending to *licentiousness*—namely, the proclamation of a free pardon in the blood of Christ, and an everlasting title to heaven in the righteousness of Christ. Let the world say what it will, the Holy Ghost says, “The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus ii. 11, 12).

Should you not rejoice in this title of Jehovah—“The Lord our Righteousness?” Who, then, can have such righteousness as the believer? Perfect, infinite, everlasting—and being everlasting, it is a title to eternal life and blessedness! Oh! could we unite all the righteousness of all the angels that now surround the throne of God, it would not be equal to the righteousness of a believer; be-

cause this is the righteousness of God. Be joyful in the Lord that you have such a portion! let your whole heart delight in it. *This righteousness is for ever!* It shall not be abolished. It is of Me, saith the Lord! Look at this righteousness as you will, and how full of blessedness is it!

Look at its *quality*. It is the righteousness of God—pure, perfect, spotless. It covers all defects. No stain of sin can possibly appear through it. The believer is looked at in the righteousness of God, and therefore well may it be said, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.”

Look at its *quantity*. It is infinite—it can never be exhausted. What myriads it has covered, and will cover! It is adapted to that “multitude which no man can number, gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev. vii. 9). We shall not then know Jew from Gentile, for Christ hath made both one.

Look at its *duration*. It is everlasting, and can never come to an end ; for “My righteousness shall be for ever,” saith the Lord.

Think of its *blessing*! To have a title to everlasting life, of which none can rob us, for this is what thieves cannot steal ; which none can dispute, for God hath accepted it ; which can never decay, for it is incorruptible ; which can never fail in its efficacy, for it is amply sufficient to cover all defects ; which can never be less acceptable, for God is well pleased with it. How wonderful this thought ! How appropriately expressed in the lines familiar to you all—

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress :
Midst flaming worlds, in these array’d,
With joy may I lift up my head.”

Think of the wonderful union proclaimed in the text, “The Lord *our* Righteousness.” So that the believer may say, “Christ’s righteousness is mine. I am accounted righteous

before God for the merits' sake of Jesus Christ." He identifies the believer with Himself. For just as all the members of the human body constitute one person, and are the man, so the members of Christ's body are called Christ (1 Cor. xii. 12). We find similar teaching in the Old Testament on this subject. Observe my text, and then look at Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16—"This is the name wherewith she shall be called, *The Lord* our Righteousness." Who is *she*? but the Church. It is the union between Christ and the Church. It is the Bride taking the name of the Bridegroom! I am not unaware that scholars give another rendering of this verse, as well as that of the text, but it does not materially affect the ordinary version. (See Blayney on Jer. *in loco*.)

It shews the oneness of Christ with His people; how He identifies Himself with them; that they have the same Father—the same God—and are to sit on the same throne, and share the same glory.

Remember to keep the righteousness of Christ distinct from your own. Christ's is *perfect*; yours is imperfect. His is your *title* to heaven; but yours is your sanctification, your conformity to Him, called in Scripture your "meetness to partake the inheritance of the saints in light."

Are you aiming to prove that you possess His righteousness, by striving after conformity to Him—likeness to His mind—doing His will—keeping His commandments—separating from the world and the things of it—setting your affections on things above—living in meekness and lowliness of spirit, in gentleness and forbearance of temper—having the law of kindness on your tongue, and the spirit of love in your heart—by activity in doing good—by self-denial and watchfulness—by prayer and the study of Scripture? Do not be cast down because these things are but feeble in you. "Despise not the day of small things." Persevere, in the strength of the Lord, and in due time

“ye shall reap, if ye faint not” (Gal. vi. 9). But rejoice in Him who is unchangeable, and trust in His righteousness who can never fail you, “Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. x. 37). Yet a little, and you shall be gathered to your rest; and you shall bask for ever in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, who is now, and will be for ever, “*The Lord our Righteousness.*”

JEHOVAH-SHALOM.

FATHER, I know that all my life
Is portion'd out for me,
And the changes that are sure to come
I do not care to see ;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate ;
And a work of lowly love to do,
For the Lord on whom I wait.

So I ask Thee for the daily strength
To none that ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life
While keeping at Thy side ;
Content to fill a little space
If Thou be glorified.

In the service that Thy love appoints,
There are no bonds for me ;
For my inmost heart is taught "the truth"
That makes Thy children "free ;"
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty.

LECTURE IV.

GOD'S PEACE.

JUDGES vi. 24.

“Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.”

THE title to be considered this morning is Jehovah-shalom, which the margin renders, “The Lord send peace.” The subject is the peace which God gives, and by which He fits us for His service. When God has eminent work for any to do, He usually fits and qualifies them for the performance of it. When the Son of God was to take upon Him our nature, to suffer and die, it is said, “A body hast thou prepared me”—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.” When Saul

was to be fitted to sit on the throne of Israel, "God gave him another heart." Daniel, too, was preferred by Darius, "because an excellent spirit was found in him." But although we may have qualifications for some particular work, we must take heed to our spirit, to see that that is right with God, and that we are really serving Him in the work we have to do ; otherwise we shall be merely instruments in His hands, and not His servants. Jesus Christ was the real Servant of God—Daniel also. They both loved God, and so did His work. Saul, also, and Jehu, did God's work ; but, alas ! it is to be feared, they were but instruments, and not servants. Their heart was not with God in what they did. In the character brought before us in the text, we see a man qualified to be a real servant of God.

The circumstances of Israel were at this time of an afflictive kind. The Midianites so oppressed them by destroying their crops, driving off their cattle, and laying waste

their country, that many of the children of Israel were fain to flee to the mountains, and live in dens, and caves, and strongholds (Judges vi. 1-6). The feelings, therefore, of Gideon, as expressed in verse 13, were but natural,—“O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” But the Lord had in no sense forgotten them; for He sent a prophet to teach them, but they would not obey God's voice. He had in no sense forsaken them; for He now appeared to Gideon for the very purpose of qualifying him, as He had formerly qualified Moses, to deliver His people! The Lord found him in an humble, though honest occupation—threshing wheat; but doing it in such a way as shewed he feared discovery. And it is now, when Israel's fortunes are at the lowest, that the Lord appears for their

help. In reading through the chapter, we must see that Gideon on this occasion, as well as on that mentioned in verse 36, manifested a weakness of faith, and a difficulty of being satisfied with God's word of promise, which we ought on all accounts to endeavour to avoid; but, in spite of all his demands, God graciously gave him such a token of favour, in accepting his offering, as perfectly set his mind at rest. It is true, when Gideon understood who had appeared to him, he was overwhelmed with dread and apprehension; but the gracious assurance of the Lord, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die," calmed his mind; and he built an altar unto the Lord, and called it "Jehovah-shalom." Now, it was in the strength of this peace, this reliance on the Lord's favour, that Gideon was to go forth to do God's work. We will consider,

I. THE STRENGTH OF REAL SERVICE—
PEACE WITH GOD.

II. THE NATURE OF THIS PEACE.

I. THE STRENGTH OF REAL SERVICE— PEACE WITH GOD.

The angel of the Lord, who appeared to Gideon, is no doubt the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah-Jesus ; and all He said was calculated to assure Gideon's heart. "The Lord is with *thee*." Observe how personal is the address, "Have not I sent *thee* ? Surely I will be with thee."

There can be no real, hearty service, without this firm assurance of God's favour. So long as a man is in doubt how God regards him—so long as he doubts whether He is a reconciled God—so long as he doubts his own relation to God—so long as he doubts whether what he does will be accepted or not—there can be no heartiness in service. You all know this. It is a truth of everyday life. We must have felt how distressing and disheartening it is, when we are trying to help or serve a friend, to feel a doubt whether it will be agreeable or acceptable after all. And this is doubly the case when

the matter is between God and us! It makes the hands hang down, and the chariot wheels drag heavily. It takes away all alacrity, and spring, and pleasure in the service. But let us be assured that what we do, however poor, and short of what it ought to be, will be kindly received, and there is no effort and self-denial too great for us to make.

I am not unaware that there is a school which teaches, that we can by service, as it were, propitiate God; and that a man may make himself acceptable by what he does. But this is a vain idea. Scripture encourages nothing of the sort; for our services are surely never accepted when our persons are not. Such services may be used by the Lord, as Jehu's were in destroying idolatry; but such persons are not God's servants, only His instruments. No! as a dead man cannot work himself into a living one, so a man, "dead in trespasses and sins," does not work himself into spiritual life. We do not work *up* to life, but *from* life. We work because

we *are* alive, not in order to the attainment of life. So in happy service. We do not work *up* to peace, but *from* peace. We work cheerfully and heartily for God, because we are at peace with Him. And in this there is all the difference between active and cheerful service, and the dull, cold discharge of duty, which we have no heart to do, but which, like slaves, we are afraid to leave undone.

There is another consideration, too, which proves this point: that as God is not served but by His own Spirit—as “the flesh,” as a principle, does not (cannot) serve God; so we only serve Him as we are influenced by His Holy Spirit. And it is this Holy Spirit, that, taking of the things of Christ and shewing them to us,—shewing us our own individual interest in them—how Christ died for *my* sins, and rose again for *my* justification—how He “loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*,”—brings *peace* to the soul; for the soul that believes this has peace. “Being

justified by faith, we have peace with God;" and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us." Then, indeed, "the love of Christ constraineth us." Then the whole man is devoted to God's service. He feels, "I am not my own, but bought with a price: I must, therefore, glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's." This is no mere human deduction, but is illustrated in the case of many leading characters in Scripture. See it in Noah (Gen. vi. 8); "he found grace in the eyes of the Lord,"—that is, favour; he was at peace with God, and then he served Him, and did His work as a preacher of righteousness, and a builder of the ark. See Joseph in Egypt (Gen. xxxix. 2); "the Lord was with Joseph,"—assuring him of His favour, and then he did God's work, in making preparation for his family, who were eventually to come down into Egypt. See Moses; although learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, it was not until he had been brought to

know God in the wilderness, and had been assured that God would be with him (Ex. iii. 12), that he was qualified for his work of delivering Israel out of bondage. If you look at Acts vii. 25, you will see that he attempted it before, but his brethren "understood not." See Isaiah, overwhelmed with dread at the vision of the Lord; but as soon as "the live coal from off the altar touched his lips, and his sin was purged"—and he was assured of the love of God; in other words, "at peace"—he was all alacrity for service. "Here am I, send me." Thus the Lord nerved Ezekiel for his work, not only by saying, "I send thee" (Ezek. ii. 1-3), but by establishing the power of His word in his heart (Ezek. iii. 3). So it was with Gideon. The Lord, Jehovah-Jesus, appeared to him; found him in his obscurity, and fitted him to take the lead in Israel. But observe his hesitation after the Lord addressed him (verse 15), "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor

in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. We see the same hesitation in Moses (Ex. iii. 13, and Ex. iv. 1, 10)—“O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue;” and this reluctance on the part of Moses was carried so far, although the Lord met his objections one by one, that “the anger of the Lord was kindled against him.” So that we are taught to take heed, lest what *may be* modest hesitation about service run into sinful objection to its performance.

But see, again, the re-assurance of our gracious Lord (Judges vi. 16), in Gideon's case, —“Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man;” then the acceptance of the offering, and Gideon's alarm! and then the gracious words, “Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die” (ver. 23).

We may ask, perhaps, what assured the heart of Gideon, and gave him peace? It

was the word of the Lord, "Peace be unto thee," which he believed implicitly. How valuable is the written Word in this aspect! What a privilege to have it always to refer to—to be able to assure our hearts again and again of God's love! Oh, may the Holy Spirit write the promises on our souls with all "the riches of the full assurance of understanding."

Another thing, too, which gave Gideon confidence, was the light of God's countenance lifted up upon him:—"The Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" This was the might of Gideon in which he was to do such great things—the faith of God's favour and presence. Not merely that God loved him, but would be with him, and strengthen as well as direct him! And what is there a man cannot do when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ? when faith is strong; and the man can say, "I know whom

I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?" What service is too hard? "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Yes! nothing is impossible to faith; and faith is the root of peace. And just in proportion as we can trust Christ, we are happy, and can work for Him.

This is a practical fact of Christianity. What made Peter and John rejoice, after they were beaten before the Council, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name? and Paul and Silas sing hymns in the prison at Philippi with their backs still lacerated by the scourging? It was peace—inward peace, in the midst of outward trouble. God had spoken peace to their souls by the blood of Christ. They could look to God as their reconciled Father—to Christ as their Redeemer—to the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier. They could rejoice in sin forgiven. Their hearts

were set on heavenly things. They regarded themselves as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, and heaven as their eternal home! Faith in God's unfailing word assured them of these things, and they were at peace; consequently, none of the things which they suffered moved them; they could do great things!

My dear brethren, have you never felt this? When you have realised Christ's presence, how strong you were?—how bold you were?—how you could speak out for the honour of the Lord, under circumstances in which, perhaps, at other times you were a coward, and were silent?—how you could go forth and perform duties from which at other times you have shrunk?—how you could relish Scripture, and the ordinances of God's house, when at other times they were cold and unmeaning? So it is when we are living in fellowship with Jesus, and in the enjoyment of His peace, we can do the work He calls us to!

Having seen what peace can do, let us

look at its nature, and into our hearts, to see if we know anything about it.

II. THE NATURE OF THIS PEACE!

It is different from all other kinds of peace. It is a peace which God gives. There is a peace which may be called the peace of temper. Some persons are so calm and easy, that nothing seems to ruffle them. The joys and sorrows of life seem alike unable to move them. Let things go wrong or right, they are equally calm. This is not the peace of God.

Again, there is what may be called the peace of circumstances,—that which arises from prosperous affairs, easy competence, good health, a loving family, kind friends, &c. The life of some seems to glide along in one unbroken stream of enjoyment. This is not the peace of God.

Again, there is the peace of the world; arising from gaiety, bustle, excitement, pleasure, and fashionable amusements. Some people never think beyond the present mo-

ment; they are always gay, and seem able to defy care. This is not the peace of God.

Again, there is the peace of the devil. When "the strong man armed" has entire possession of the soul; when the man is given up to self-indulgence; when he is indifferent to sin, so only that it yields him pleasure; when the warnings and exhortations of Scripture are alike unheeded; when the "conscience is seared as with a hot iron," and the man is utterly blinded by the god of this world! I need not say this differs widely from the peace of God! For, as I have said, it is a peace which God gives—which comes from Him alone—the peace of Jehovah-Jesus—the very same which Christ has, now He is seated at the right hand of God. This is *the peace* which He bequeathed to His believing people, when He said, "My peace give I unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you"—the peace in which God keeps those whose minds are stayed upon Him (Isa. xxvi. 3).

Paul calls it "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." But the expression, "passeth all understanding," must not deter us in our inquiry into its nature; for this applies rather to the degree of its excellence, than to its nature. It is so excellent that it cannot be fully understood, but it by no means implies that we cannot understand it at all.

All God's blessings are understood in some degree by His people, although it will require the maturity of the soul's powers in heaven to know them fully. Of this peace, then, we know that its author is God; and that it cometh down, like all other good and perfect gifts, from the Father of Lights. It is peace of *soul*—of *conscience*. It is pure, holy, sanctifying; and is of so tender a nature, that it flies at the approach of wilful sin, and the offender is left destitute of heavenly peace.

The agent who works this peace in man is the Holy Ghost. As the *love* of God, so the

peace of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. He is, indeed, in this office, a Comforter; and fills the heart and soul with those ineffable consolations which constitute “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” The Holy Ghost communicates, from the spiritual treasury, all spiritual blessings in Christ, to those to whom this treasury is laid open by faith in the blood of atonement. The *way* in which these blessings are communicated is, indeed, various, and difficult to define; but the children of God can, however, rejoice in *the fact*, that a heavenly calm does sometimes pervade the mind, keeping it in Christ Jesus—when earth and its “lying vanities” fade from the perception, and heaven comes more fully into view—when a communion with God is enjoyed which cannot be expressed to another—something which seems to bring a special sense of God’s presence upon the soul. Short-lived are these seasons, but still unquestionably enjoyed by the children of God. Still the

peace of God is generally of a more constant nature than this, and arises from three causes.

1. *A clear sense of God's favour* towards us in Christ. There can be no true peace without this. But I will not enlarge on this point, as I have already spoken of it.

2. *Entire submission to the will of God!* There can be no peace without this. Where the will runs counter to the will of God, there cannot be peace. This is a hard lesson to learn, "Thy will be done." These are the words of Jesus, and He used them in their fullest sense. Many of His followers know their truth before they feel their power. And we must not be deterred from trying to learn their meaning, because the understanding may be in advance of the heart. But if there be a want of submission to God, there cannot be peace; for unsubmitiveness, in whatever degree it may exist, is *rebellion*; and "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. xlviii. 22). The peace of God dwells not

in troubled waters. It produces a great calm, and stills the soul. It does not find the soul calm, but makes it so. The Spirit of God broods over the passions, and hushes all into uncomplaining silence and peace.

3. *An appropriation of the promises of God!* Gideon, and all the great heroes of Scripture, believed what God said, and were at peace. There is a fulness of all spiritual blessing in God. The promises of Scripture are discoveries of them; and we have peace just as we are able by faith to appropriate them, and make them our own. The promises are God's bonds and pledges, by which He engages Himself to give us all we need.

Think on these three points—1st, A clear sense of God's favour; 2d, Submission to God's appointments; 3d, Believing, so as to appropriate the promises of Scripture.

Further, it may be said with respect to this peace, that it exercises an effect on the disposition and temper. It subdues the most unpromising tempers—the harsh, the fretful,

peevish, revengeful, selfish, quick, passionate, &c.—and makes the individual who was once a burden in the family, a blessing to all around. It does not, indeed, effect this all at once; but it enables us to resist tempers, and so gradually to overcome them. Consider this. Christianity is something practical. The peace of God is to do something. It is not to be mere passive feeling, but it is to work results.

This peace comes out in our circumstances. When prosperity is gone, the peace of God still remains, if the will is submissive to God. If we can trust God as a Father, as tender and kind as He is wise and good, what is to rob us of peace? It is true our tears may flow, our hearts be torn, but we need not part with peace. For peace is not in external things, but in God. The creature may be taken from us; that which gave its peculiar charm to our earthly existence may be gone; but the peace of God is independent of outward circumstances, it is something far deeper.

It has to do with the love of God, not with the love of the creature. It has to do with pardon of sin, and a conscious interest in Christ's redeeming work; and the realisation of these by faith will soothe, yea, gladden the soul in the darkest storm of earthly sorrow. So that whatever else we lose, if we can only believe, we need not lose our peace!

Observe, now, the contrast between the peace of the world and the peace of God. The peace of the world springs from bustle and gaiety: the peace of God is felt in the calm of retirement, when the soul communes with its God alone. The peace of God is purifying and sanctifying, and gradually prepares the soul for heaven: all other kinds of peace but increase self-will, and chain the soul to earth. The peace of God weans the soul from this world—and now that it has begun to taste communion with God, it esteems the things of earth more nearly at their proper rate. Worldly peace is broken in a moment; at the first blast of affliction

it is gone. The peace of God is abiding—it continues steadily through trials, for it is that which this world can neither give nor take away.

But do you ask, How am I to acquire this peace? I reply, Christ is the *source* of this peace, as well as the *channel* through which it flows to man! Would we know why God blesses His Church with peace? To Calvary must we look, and there we see “Jehovah-jireh,” the provision which the Lord has made for man’s peace. Yes! in the bleeding sacrifice there offered—in the brow crowned with thorns—in the side pierced by the spear—in that agonised frame—in that piteous cry—in the horrors and sufferings, yet glories of the crucifixion—we see the source and channel of our peace!

Dear brethren, what know you of this peace? If you know it not, *seek it in Christ!* Think not that it is mere rapture and enthusiasm. It is true there may have been pretenders to this peace, who have

mistaken *strong* feelings for *gracious* ones; and it is ever Satan's way to bring discredit upon truth by raising up pretenders and hypocrites. But still do not think there is no such thing as the peace of God. *There is*, on the authority of God's own Word; and it may be obtained from "Jehovah-shalom"—Jehovah-Jesus! The question is, Have you found it? If you know this peace, guard it carefully. Carry it, like the flame of a candle, in the hollow of your hand, for the breath of worldliness will put it out. Watch against anything which may interrupt it. Guard against a light and trifling and careless spirit. Nothing sooner destroys peace than *thoughtless talk*. Watch against unholy, discontented, fretful tempers. Be not dissatisfied with what God has already done for your souls. "Despise not the day of small things." The peace of God will not dwell in a murmuring heart. Guard against self-righteousness. Peace comes from Jesus Christ. Self-righteousness tries to find it in

self. Oh! foolish heart, there is no peace there. It comes from heaven, through Jesus Christ! I would say also, guard against *wilful sin*. This may seem a strange admonition to believers; but what are we to say of leaving undone what we know we ought to do, and doing what we know we ought not to do? Are not these wilful sins? And can a man be at peace who lives thus? Impossible. What, then, are the lessons we learn?

1. We see that whom God makes His servant He qualifies for His work. Seek, therefore, of the Lord qualification for His service. It begins in the heart—in your own soul. Gideon first obtained peace of soul, then he began to work. Let your first work be to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and so get grace for the service of the Lord. You may ask, Am I, then, to leave off doing my duty till I obtain peace? Surely not; but try to do it in faith. *Believe and act.* Say I do this because my God commands

me, and I trust Him for grace and strength to do it rightly. But try to turn a bare duty into a happy privilege. Endeavour to realise that God's service is perfect freedom. But you will only be able to do this as you taste the sweets of peace with God through Jesus Christ. Remember the first step to real service is *peace*, and this begins in your own soul!

2. Observe the progressive power of this peace. Having realised peace in his own soul, Gideon's faith extends to his *family*. His next act is to cut down his father's grove where Baal was worshipped. Knowing the peace of God ourselves, can we be indifferent either to the honour of God or to the welfare of those we love?

How many of you may be called to cut down some Baal's grove in your family! This requires strong faith. It is hard for a child to teach a parent when the lesson is unwelcome! and much more to tell them of their sins, and try to reform them. It

seems almost irreverent and undutiful to tell one's parents they are wrong, and need a firmer hold upon the Saviour! It is difficult enough to deal with one's brothers and sisters, but far harder with one's parents. Here it is that our Lord's words are often verified, "I am not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword;" so that "a man's foes are they of his own household." But be not discouraged; cherishing the peace of God, you will be able to do these hard things, and much more, and to do them in such a way as haply to preserve peace. Think of what is involved. Look to the Lord and fear not.

3. Observe, lastly, that Gideon's peace extends in its influence. He next acts for his country. So it is as faith grows, the sphere of its operation enlarges, and the believer's heart embraces the world. Hence the true spring of all missionary effort. And, oh! see to it that you begin in the right place—in *your own heart*. Would you

be a benefactor to your country and the world at large? *seek peace for your own soul.* Would you really benefit your family? *still seek peace for your own soul,* and "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Let your steady, consistent, Christian example win them to Christ! Would you really consult your own best interests? *still seek peace in your own soul,* and never forget that the root of real love to God, to ourselves, to our neighbour, is Jesus Christ, "Jehovah-shalom."

JEHOVAH-NISSI.

FIGHT the good fight ; lay hold
Upon eternal life ;
Keep but the shield, be bold,
Stand through the hottest strife ;
Invincible while in the field,
Thou canst not fail, unless thou yield.

No force of earth or hell,
Though fiends with men unite,
Truth's champion can compel,
However prest, to flight :
Invincible upon the field.
He cannot fall, unless he yield.

Trust in thy Saviour's might ;
Yea, till thy latest breath,
Fight, and, like Him, in fight,
By dying, conquer death ;
And all-victorious in the field,
Then with thy sword thy spirit yield.

Great words are these, and strong ;
Yet, Lord, I look to Thee,
To whom alone belong
Valour and victory.
With Thee, my Captain, in the field,
I must prevail—I cannot yield.

LECTURE V.

GOD'S VICTORY.

EXODUS xvii. 15.

*“And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it
Jehovah-nissi.”*

Our last lecture taught us the necessity of peace with God, in order to render acceptable service. The subject of the present lecture is *the need of dependence upon God in conflict*. The Christian life is always represented in Scripture as a struggle, in which we have a ceaseless enemy ever striving to overthrow our faith, and so to ruin our soul; and whom we can successfully meet and defeat only by faith in Jesus Christ. And what a mercy it is that faith in the Son

of God is not only able "to overcome the world," but also to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked!"

We have now to consider the title, "Jehovah-nissi," which the margin tells us means, "The Lord my banner;" and the materials for its illustration must be gathered from the history with which the text stands connected. It is a passage in the history of Israel—and, indeed, the history of Israel is a great storehouse of instruction for the Church of Christ. The sins and idolatries of Israel are "written for our admonition," that we may avoid them; their signal deliverances, for "our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

The more closely we study the history of Israel, in all its minute detail, the greater the knowledge we shall have of ourselves; for the history of Israel is but the history of the human heart: and the more we are acquainted with God's long-suffering, and

protection, and favour towards them in spite of all their sins, the more we shall know of His dealings *in grace* towards His Church.

The great lesson prominently taught in all Israel's wanderings in the wilderness, is the *need of dependence on God*. After their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, this teaching especially begins. They learn they must be dependent on God for everything—for *water*, for *bread*; the one brought miraculously from a *rock*, the other as miraculously rained down from heaven. The event commemorated in the words of the text shews that they were to be as dependent upon God for strength in conflict—that it is under His banner alone, victory is sure; and although, in reading what befell Israel, it would seem that man's life is only one series of dangers, deliverances, and escapes, yet the Lord at last brings His people to the haven where they would be! The event connected with the text is written as a memorial of God's mercy, and to strengthen the faith of His

people; for it was not more certain that God defeated Amalek on this occasion, than that He would, in His own good time, “utterly put out the remembrance of him from under heaven.” This was partially accomplished by Saul (1 Sam. xv.), and subsequently completed by David (1 Sam. xxx.), with the exception of “four hundred young men who rode upon camels and fled” (ver. 17).

The occasion of Moses raising this altar is the defeat of Amalek; and the lesson is, that bringing the Lord, by faith and dependence, into our circumstances—ranging ourselves under His banner—considering conflict and trial as not coming without His gracious permission, and dealing with it in His strength—we shall conquer as truly as Israel did.

But it may be asked, How does this teach us, seeing that Amalek is no more, that his remembrance is clean put out?

Brethren, there is an Amalek still in this world, of which this history is but a feeble

representation. One with whom all Christ's people have to fight; one "whose hand is continually against the throne of God;" one "with whom the Lord will have war from generation to generation;" one who once dared to enter the lists with the Son of God; but one whom "the God of peace will bruise under our feet shortly;" and who is eventually to be destroyed in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever. It is Satan—the Prince of this world! "The principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world"—those principles which are so rife in this world, and which are wielded with such subtlety and force, by the god of this world—which assault us in such unexpected ways, and with such force, at times; at one time springing up, as it were, a serpent from beneath our feet; at another, confronting us with all the attractiveness of an angel of light. These are our Amalek. And the consideration of the circumstances in which Israel was placed, will help us to

understand our position as good soldiers of the cross, pledged to fight the battles of the Lord. We will consider,

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ISRAEL.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ISRAEL.

Under this head, I must direct your attention, *first*, to “the *conflict*.” The Israelites were scarcely come out of Egypt before they were attacked by the Amalekites, although no provocation had been given by Israel; but it was doubtless a revengeful feeling, from the way in which they considered their father Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 15, 16) had been deprived of his birthright by Jacob, and consequently of the land of Canaan, to which the Israelites were now journeying. See the description of Amalek’s conduct (Deut. xxv. 17–19)—“Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hind-

most of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God." And if you remember, in Ps. lxxxiii. 7, Amalek is mentioned as one of those nations who were confederate against God and His Church, and who said, "Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." Now, what has ever been Satan's conduct against the Church of God? What was it to our first parents? Did he not attack, quite unprovoked, the "feeble" one? "for the woman was first in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14). Is not "the hand of this Amalek always against the throne of the Lord"—that heart of man where the Lord should have His throne? Is not Satan's malice always against the life of God in the soul of man? Was it not so in Adam's case? Is it not so in the case of every one where the life of God is restored in the soul? Is it not so in all the Church of Christ?—in all who have left the spiritual Egypt, an un-

godly world, and set their faces towards the heavenly Canaan? It is so. And, moreover, this is to be borne in mind,—in all his temptations, great or small, Satan never means less than death—the everlasting destruction of the soul. Oh! never forget this; let the departure from what is right be the very least, so slight that none shall ever observe it at all, yet his object is ever the same—death. The very deviation itself may have so plausible a reason, that it almost seems to warrant it. He has no objection, therefore, to see persons pursuing right objects, if only it be by wrong means; for he knows we are not “to do evil that good may come;” and so, if he can corrupt the integrity of either our motive, our spirit, or our end, he will not harass us further, but let us be at rest, thinking all is well. For he does not lead his victims straight to the gulf—this would frighten them—but conducts them thither by a thousand winding paths. Satan is always trying, persecuting, ensnar-

ing the children of God. His malice and efforts are directed against such; and the feebler and fainter their faith, the severer are his attacks. And although the people of God desire peace in this stormy world, and to conduct themselves "blamelessly and harmlessly," yet, as soldiers of Christ, they cannot obtain their inheritance without preparing themselves for combat, and "warring a good warfare." And this warfare will last as long as this life lasts. There is "no discharge in this war" till "mortality is swallowed up of life." So long as life lasts, the good soldier must "endure hardness." Trial, in some shape or other, will be his. He will be constantly reminded this is not his rest—that "here he has no continuing city." And perhaps the greatest trial of all is the discipline needed to bring him into a state of simple obedience to, and dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. *Then*, it is not warfare and conflict that need discourage him; "looking unto Jesus," all will be well!

2. *The Commander.* Joshua was commanded to "choose out men, and go out and fight with Amalek" (ver. 9). And of whom is Joshua the type? It is another name for Jesus, who is given to us of God to be "a leader and commander" (Isa. lv. 4). He is "the Captain of our salvation," under whose banner all believers are enlisted, and must fight. But this it is which makes the victory sure. We have a Commander who is well acquainted with all the wiles of the enemy, and who has already conquered him for us, and who has declared that He will "bruise him under our feet shortly." Besides, too, as "Leader," He appoints us our respective stations, whether we bear more or less of the brunt of the battle, and we may be sure the position in which He places us is the right one. It matters not where it may be, however humble and obscure; nor what it may be, however small the service given us to perform. If it be what Jesus has given us to do, it is the fittest for us, as well as the

most acceptable to Him. It is doing what He tells us to do, not merely what we think will please Him. And, moreover, this is the most honourable position for us. It is the Master we serve which makes the service honourable. And however unfit we may be when He calls us to His work, He can and will qualify us for it. He can supply all our want of knowledge—all our weakness—for He has “the tongue of the learned” (Isa. l. 4), and to Him we must look for direction and support. And so long as we are looking to Him for orders, and working these orders out in His name and strength, and according to His will, we may safely depend on Him for provision, and for an abundant share of the spoils of victory.

It is said, “Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (ver. 13). And who is it that has vanquished Amalek on the cross? Even He who “spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them openly in it.” Who is it

that "gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength?" (Isa. xl. 29). Even He "whose strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9). It is Jesus, and it is through this Commander we are made more than conquerors!

3. *The Means.* While Joshua was fighting in the valley, Moses was to stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand (ver. 9). The rod of Moses was that with which he had wrought his wonders in Egypt, and it was a special emblem of Divine power. While he held it up, Israel prospered; but when, through infirmity, he let it drop, Amalek prevailed.

Now, it is thus precisely that God's people prevail against their enemies. They must keep their eye fixed on, and thus magnify, the power of God exerted on their behalf. As long as the eye is single, and faith fixed on Christ alone, they will triumph over every foe; but if, through infirmity, or weakness of *faith*, they look away from Christ, that

instant is there failure and defeat. Have we not an illustration of this in the case of Peter walking on the water? So long as he kept his eye on Christ, he could walk on the top of the waves; "but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid," and began to sink. We learn another lesson, too,—that those trials on the very top of which we can walk, so long as we are simply looking to Christ, open their jaws to swallow us up, and we sink under them, when we cease to look to the Lord. There is no strength equal to every conflict, but that of Christ.

The lifting up of the hands of Moses may further denote the efficacy of prayer; and it is certain the success of service will fluctuate, just as a throne of grace is much and earnestly, or little and carelessly, used. Now, Christ is both Moses and Joshua to us. Our Joshua, who fights our battles here below; our Moses, in the world above, ever making intercession for us, that our faith fail not! And it is by a combination of hard conflict

and wrestling with our enemies, backed by fervent prayer, that we shall win the victory. By prayer we obtain strength—in conflict we use it; but Christ is all!

4. *The Victory.* You observe (ver. 14) that Moses was commanded, “Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” And what, I would ask, is written in Scripture but a memorial of what has been done through the malice of our Amalek, and of the victory obtained through the valour of our Joshua? A record of the ruin sin has wrought—of the conflict and victory of Christ—and a promise of the final extinction of Amalek? Yes, in the provision which Jehovah has made in the blood and righteousness of Christ, we see the grounds of our victory. In the death and resurrection of Christ, we have the pledge of our complete victory, and the final death of Amalek. And if Moses thought this victory over Amalek

worthy of an altar of memorial, can we find no passages in our past history on which we should inscribe "*Jehovah-nissi?*" If the way by which we have come thus far in life has been marked in many parts by conflict and trial, has it not also been marked by special deliverances? Are there not many, many scenes, which memory can recall, in which but for the Lord we must have fallen? Are there not many dangers marked by as many wonderful escapes? Above all, are there not many sins, over which the blood-red hand has been graciously drawn to blot them all away—so that, although the memory of the act remains, the guilt is washed away for ever? Oh, surely if Samuel could set up his "Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;" so, after every deliverance, should we set up a memorial of "*Jehovah-nissi!*"

And if we read, "Joshua discomfited Amalek," what has not our Joshua done! Was ever victory so complete? At what a

cost, too! Did He not “bear our griefs and carry our sorrows;” yea, “bear our sins in His own body on the tree?” Was not “He who knew no sin, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him?” Could any payment be more complete than this?—any suretyship more exact in its compensation? Could any creditor be more completely satisfied than God, or any debtor more completely exonerated than man? Could any tyrant be more completely vanquished than Satan, or any captive more completely liberated than the believing sinner? Impossible! *Christ’s work is perfect*—perfect for the honour of God—perfect for His own satisfaction—perfect for the salvation of His Church.

This is the memorial recorded in Scripture,—that God has made a covenant in Christ, by which the salvation of all His Church is everlastingly secured. This, the Holy Ghost teaches. He gives spiritual perceptions of the eternal love of God to His people in

Christ. He shews the heart of Christ to His people—His bowels and mercies—His endless compassions—and how everything He is and has done, is suited to a sinner's wants. He shews that the joy and peace, which a believer has, are not built upon anything he is or feels in himself, but upon the person and work of Christ, as revealed in the everlasting gospel—that the revelation of Christ is the foundation of all faith in Him, and that man's feelings or sinfulness in nowise alter the truth of God, nor the record He hath given of His Son. And it is what a man believes of Christ which gives him rest. Does he feel he is a sinner? He is to avail himself of the blood of Christ. Does he feel himself empty of all good? He must receive of Christ's fulness. Does He feel himself to be nothing? Christ is all! This is the good news of the gospel—this is the comfort to the weary and heavy laden—the seeing in our Joshua all that is needed, not merely for the healing, and cleansing, and

sanctifying of our souls, but for the final destruction of our Amalek. Satan still survives, and is permitted for a season to harass and try God's people, and will do so till our Lord comes again; but as it is written of the literal Amalek, "Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever" (Numbers xxiv. 20), so shall it be with our great enemy!

It is, no doubt, a wearying part of our conflict, that we have to contend so often with the same old sins—lusts, evil thoughts, habits, indolence, self-indulgence, &c. Amalek has entrenched himself so deeply in our hearts and nature, that we never seem to get to the bottom of his deceits and snares. Oh! what does it not cost to "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ?" What does it not cost the believer to be strange to bosom lusts which approach with such unholy familiarity, and intrude at such solemn seasons? Who is not tormented

by the memory of sins committed years ago? and although the guilt may be all washed away in the blood of Christ, yet we still carry the hateful memory within. This conflict is heavy, but it is in the power of our Joshua to sustain us. He has the strength to give us, and He will impart it in answer to prayer!

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT.

“Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” We may ask, Where is the literal Amalek? He is gone. Did God forget His promise because He allowed generations to pass before He fulfilled it? In nowise. The remembrance of Amalek's sin was as fresh with God when He put out his name as when Amalek committed it. Israel had but to wait patiently and trust implicitly, and lo! it was unto them even as God said.

Their enemy was destroyed. What is the lesson? We have "need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise" (Heb. x. 36). What we need is faith in the word of God.

What an encouragement to resist sin in every form, is it to know, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification"—that it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And if, by the grace of God, we are bent on resisting sin—"mortifying the deeds of the body," "crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts"—we are bent on that on which the Lord is determined too; and we may confidently look for His help. For it is not more certain that God has a people at all in this world, than that He has determined what they are to be. If from all eternity He has known them that are His, He has also predetermined that they shall be "holy and without blame before Him in love." Be not cast down by the number of

your enemies. It was after their deliverance from Egypt that the trials of Israel began. We may be screened for a season by the good providence of God, as the Israelites were kept from going through the territory of the Philistines, lest they should be alarmed by that warlike people, and return to Egypt (Exod. xiii. 17); but believers are enlisted on purpose to fight, and their courage will be put to the test.

Remember, it was "*after they were illuminated,*" the Hebrews "endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb. x. 32). So it is after you have known "Jehovah-jireh," and "Jehovah-tsidkenu," and "Jehovah-shalom," that you are called to know Him as "*Jehovah-nissi,*" and to fight the battles of the Lord. The right spirit for a Christian soldier is dependence on his Captain, obedience to His orders, and unflinching courage. Remember still, all is to be done by the power of God. It is He that will crush Amalek. Rest, then,

on His promise; it is as certain as any of His acts already fulfilled. Don't seek for holiness or strength in yourself, but in Jesus. Your fallen nature will never be otherwise than it is in this time-state. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and will ever remain so; it is, as a principle, incapable of improvement. But your hope, your refuge, your security, are all in Jesus. Look, then, to Jesus. Be of good courage. Shall God permit Satan to mar His work for ever? Shall the Omnipotent Jehovah be baffled by His rebellious creature? Are some of Satan's host already "in everlasting chains," and shall not all be there? Yes, if there be strength, and truth, and faithfulness in God! Let, then, "Jehovah-nissi" be our banner, and let us display it boldly, because of the truth!

1. I would here remark, *A banner is a rallying point.* So should the Cross be for all Christ's people. Christ is the ensign to which the gathering of the people is to be.

Under this should they be found, and nowhere else. As Amalek smote the hindermost of Israel, so will the great spiritual Amalek strike at the soul of any loiterer in the path of service, who does not bear his cross boldly, and, like Joshua and Caleb, follow the Lord fully.

2. A banner is to distinguish Christ's soldiers. Never be ashamed of your colours. Cleave to them to the last! Encourage and help each other, as Aaron and Hur helped Moses. Hold up each other's hands. Animate each other's hearts. Think what a Captain you are fighting under! The world which tempts you has been overcome by Him. The Prince of this world has been judged by Him. Fight on but a little while, and ere long you shall put your feet on the neck of all your enemies, and enjoy the fruit of victory for ever; for the battle is the Lord's. His honour is concerned in it no less than our safety. The Lord will surely

be true to Himself, and if we are true to Him, our safety is certain. Let us learn to identify ourselves with Him and His objects: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," and you shall one day be more than conquerors through the power of "Jehovah-nissi."

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.

Who can the thoughts conceive,
The feelings of his breast,
Who shall himself perceive
In heaven—at rest!

When there the spirit wakes,
And, springing from the dust,
Its new position takes
Among the just—

Methinks all other joys
Would scarce at first be felt!
This would the tongue employ—
The heart would melt.

“My trial then is done—
Ended the weary strife:
I’ve kept the faith, I’ve won
Eternal life.

“I’ve drawn my last sad breath,
Tears, sighs, are all forgot:
I’ve pass’d the gates of Death—
He harm’d me not.

“No doubtings now, nor sin,
Can dim my title clear;
By Christ I’ve enter’d in—
I’m saved—I’m here!”



LECTURE VI.

GOD'S PRESENCE.

EZEKIEL xlviii. 35.

"And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."

BEFORE we proceed to consider the title, "Jehovah-shammah," which the margin informs us is the original of the phrase, "The Lord is there," it will be right, perhaps, to say a few words on the portion of Scripture with which the text stands connected.

This portion of Scripture includes the last eight chapters of Ezekiel; and is confessedly one of the difficulties of Scripture. It contains some things "hard to be understood;" but we must distinguish as to where the diffi-

culty lies. Not, assuredly, in the chapters themselves; which are a simple, intelligible description of a city containing a temple, having a priestly ritual. This is not very difficult to understand; but the difficulty lies rather in attempting to explain *how*, and *where*, these things shall be in the dispensations of God. If we compare this portion of Scripture with others, in some respects similar, in the hope of reconciling them, it is quite beyond our power to do so; but although *we* cannot reconcile them, it does not follow that they cannot be reconciled. If the renewal of sacrifice seems at variance with "Christ's one sacrifice for sins for ever," the believing these chapters to contain merely a representation of spiritual worship seems not less difficult. If the literal interpretation contain difficulties, the spiritual is not free from them. So the most becoming course appears to be, to lay aside preconceived notions; to take this portion of Scripture as it stands, humbly acknowledging we cannot reconcile it with

other parts; but patiently waiting for the explanation which God will soon give of this, as well as of other portions of His Word; believing it to be true of some of His *words*, as of some of His *acts*, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

There can be, I think, no doubt that it applies particularly, perhaps wholly, to the Jew; and is therefore not applicable to those who are believers now; and who, if "quick" at Christ's coming, will be "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and so "be ever with Him;" and who, if first called to pass through the valley of death, will be among those whom God shall "bring with Him." But although there may be difficulties connected with the city in the context, there are certain things clear with respect to that city of which the believer in Christ now is destined to be an inhabitant. Brethren, there is a city, declared to be the believer's blessed portion and habitation, of which it may be truly

said, "The Lord is there." It is that spoken of in Rev. xxi. 2. It is "the holy city, new Jerusalem"—the city of God. The same the Old Testament saints looked for,—the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"—the city wherein is no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." It is that which, ordinarily, is called heaven; but which is spoken of, in one respect, with a distinctness which cheers the heart of a believer—namely, *as the place where the Lord is*. This is heaven to the believer,—“To be with Christ” where He is—to “see Him as He is”—to “be like Him”—to “behold His glory which He had with the Father before the world began.” This is the blessed prospect of the believer, and with this he is satisfied.

Let us consider this city, of which it may be said, "The Lord is there." When we look at Rev. xxi. 2, we see "the holy city, new Jerusalem," is spoken of as the Bride, the Lamb's wife; that is, the whole body of be-

lievers: where the place is put for the people who dwell there. We have an illustration of this form of speech in Heb. xii. 22, 23, where Paul speaks of "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the first-born;" or still more aptly in Mark i. 33, "And all the city was gathered together at the door;" and again, in Acts xiii. 44, "And the next Sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God," where we clearly understand what is meant by the city,—all the people of that city. So by "the city of God" is meant all God's believing people,—“the whole family named of Christ in heaven and earth.”

Now, of this city, of which part have crossed the flood, and part are still militant here on earth, it is the believer's privilege to know, that the Lord is not more really with those who have finished their course and have entered in through the gates, than with those who are still warring in the body of this flesh.

The Lord is with His Bride during the time she is being prepared and adorned for her Husband; for it is He who disciplines, and trains, and fits her for Himself. The Lord is with His Church now, whatever may be her state, as truly as He will be hereafter for ever!

This is my subject,—Wherever a believer is, “the Lord is there.” The believer is a “temple of the Holy Ghost”—“an habitation of God through the Spirit;” Christ “dwells in his heart.” This, if blessed, is also most solemn. Let us not look at it as a mere truth of the general omnipresence of God; but let us connect it with what it involves as respects ourselves personally. It should be a stimulus to walk worthy of our high calling. The consciousness, at all times, of the all-seeing eye of Jesus should have this effect. For if a believer consider that the eye of Jesus is on him, it cannot but make him jealous over himself lest there should be anything at work within, offensive to that eye! Now, with re-

spect to this city, the body of believers generally, and each in particular, I would say—

1st, *The Lord is there as the Searcher of hearts.* Secresy and concealment are the relief of many in this world; darkness is their refuge: but to God the darkness and the light are both alike—"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." This is solemn! It is a solemn thing to stand before a holy, sin-hating God—to think that all things are before Him—our most secret sins in the light of His countenance. Yet so it is! Every creature is open before God. This is inevitable. It is a necessity of one's being. Nothing is beyond the reach, nor beneath the notice of God; nothing so high, but He sees above it; nothing so low, but He sees beneath it; nothing so dark, but His eye pierces through it; nothing so subtle and ethereal, but He grasps it. He knows the qualities, the habits, the power, the influence, and the value of all His creatures—their

secret history, and every movement connected with them. Every human being is open before God, whether he thinks of it, and believes it, or not. This will be seen in that day when "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 16). Yes! let things be never so close or hidden, "the Lord is there." Each thing in the universe, as well as each thought in man's heart, is as if it stood alone. How strikingly is this brought out in Psalm cxxxix. 1-4, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising: Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest (*'winnowest,'* margin) my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." Oh, what a word is that, "winnowest!" Who can bear to have their paths "*winnowed?*"—to have the precious separated from the vile?—that which is from that which merely *seemeth to*

be?—to have the reality come out? We rather like to be thought all we profess to be. We shrink from having all our motives scrutinised and searched. But God is ever doing this. He is ever there to see. Nor can we escape this searching process—“Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” We cannot; do what, or go where, we will.

In the description given of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. i. 14), it is said, “His eyes were as a flame of fire.” And when He comes to deal with the churches (Rev. ii. and iii.), He begins with them all thus,—“I know thy works.” His judgment is not dependent on men’s outward profession, but is oftentimes quite independent of it, and contrary to it; and often quite contrary to that which, in their secret heart, they judge of themselves. For instance, the Church of Laodicea said of herself, “I am rich;” but Christ saw that she was “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” So, when Judas was in

the very height of his profession among the twelve, Jesus knew him to be a devil (John vi. 70); and when Peter was in the very worst of his defection, He judged him to be a child of God, and prayed for him that his faith might not fail. I repeat, this is solemn. But, to an honest heart, is it not comforting also? To you, who have "the testimony of your conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have your conversation in the world"—to you, who really try to live before God, this must be a relief. It must be to you what it was to Peter to say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Of course, such a thought is overwhelming to the hypocrite; but to the humble-minded, sincere child of God it must be a comfort.

2d, "The Lord is there" *as the Judge of what sin is*. Sin is not merely what you and I think it to be, but what the Lord sees and knows it to be. When the Holy Spirit teaches

a man about sin, it is not merely to shew him what sin is in *acts* of disobedience, but what it is in *its nature*; that it is lawlessness (1 John iii. 4), contempt of, and utter contrariety to God; that the flesh is vile, and that that principle can never be anything else before God. It is from want of this teaching that people are content to go on outwardly correct, but never watching the heart; because they do not regard its irregularities and departures from God. But the Lord sees all the evil of sin—its *pride, rebellion, hatred, enmity, insolence, arrogance, blasphemy*—how it aims at dethroning God and setting up *self*. For what is sin but rebellion? and what is rebellion, but saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us?” Yes! the Lord sees all its shapes, and forms, and circumstances; and His conclusion is, that it is the abominable thing which He hates. Now, what sin is to God, that, man’s heart is *naturally*. Whatever the extreme of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness is, that, man’s

heart is (Jer. xvii. 9); and it is into this knowledge of self, that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God gradually conduct believers, that they may see things as Jesus sees them, and feel about them as Jesus feels; so far, at least, as they can bear it. Jesus Christ gradually shews His children that they are vile in themselves; and this He does, not to terrify them, but to humble them, that they may not glory in themselves, but in Him. The believer's experience of himself is, not that he grows better, but rather worse. The more he digs into his heart, the more he sees of the real character of his motives, objects, spirit, &c.—the more he sees his heart as Jesus Christ has all along seen it to be. And this leads him to see that his salvation can *only* be *of grace*. A man who has once stood with his heart bare before Jesus Christ, sees at once that all hope in himself is gone—that he is far too abominable to have one hope of salvation but in the unfathomable mystery of God's

grace. He sees, that however gross may have been his life and conduct, the "Lord who is there" knows his heart to be immeasurably worse. Such a man sees himself in no respect different from God's account of man before the Flood, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;" that thousands of years of progress and mental culture leave man the same before God—corrupt, and lying under "the law of sin and death;" and that no mere knowledge, no philosophy can save him. Nay, more; such is the weakness of nature, that after a man has been "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," he finds himself unable to maintain his standing before God. He knows how the veriest trifle and vanity of this world will move his heart from the everlasting realities of the gospel; how soon he dishonours Christ, by pride or some other abominable sin. Such a man, so taught, can find rest only in the *free grace* of

God. Such a passage as Eph. ii. 4-8 is life to his soul:—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Yes! believers are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And this is the only point of rest for a spiritually enlightened mind. It may be painful to be stripped of *self*—to have all one *is* and *does* so "winnowed" by the *all-searching eye of Christ*, that one feels as vile and worthless as a weed upon the shore—shrivelled into nothing—yet this is the

way to make us prize "Jehovah-shammah" in another aspect.

3d, As the *Provider of the remedy!* "The Lord is there," with His children, in pointing out how perfect this remedy is. Yes! the Lord, who *knows man as He is*, has provided a salvation for *him as he is*. And when the blessed gospel speaks to us of pardon, it is pardon of our sins, to the full extent of what God knows them to be—as they are seen by His omniscience, in all their terrible aggravations—as they were in childhood, youth, manhood, old age—against light, knowledge, conscience—in the midst of profession, zeal, labour, activity in gospel duties, &c. Here we get a glimpse of the *comprehensiveness* of being *cleansed from all sin*. And, moreover, when the same blessed gospel speaks to us of "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," it is a righteousness searched and "winnowed" by God's all-seeing eye, and yet declared to be "everlasting righteousness." Think, on

the one hand, of the extent of cleansing; on the other, of the extent of righteousness. Both are the work of Jehovah-Jesus, and both are yours by faith of Jesus Christ. Oh! there is blessing in the thought, "*The Lord is there,*" in *everything*; for though it may alarm us to think of being searched through and through by the eye of the Lord, yet what a blessing to know that sin is thoroughly searched out, in its most secret hiding-places, and charged on Jesus Christ! for did but one escape, and appear against you at the last day, what could you do?

No enlightened mind could bear the knowledge God has of us, but for Christ. And you remember the use Paul makes of the atonement of Christ when speaking on this subject? "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do;" and as if he could not bear the idea, he instantly flies to the atonement,—“Seeing then we

have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

And how immeasurable the comfort of knowing, that the power and efficacy of all He is in Himself (and you know He is Jehovah, Eternal) attaches to all He has done for sinners. For instance, He has offered "one sacrifice for sins for ever." This, like Himself, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "He has obtained eternal redemption for us"—He has "brought in everlasting righteousness"—He hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified"—He is "consecrated a Priest for evermore"—"He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Now, all the value of the work and offices of Christ flows from the glory of *His person*. And the whole question, between God and

the believer, is determined on the ground of the *unalterable* value of what Christ has done. The work of our Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely above our need as sinners, vast and comprehensive as that need is; and although it is hard to believe ourselves to be so bad as God knows us to be—although man is ever looking into himself, hoping to find himself better, while the thought of God's omniscience must ever destroy such a hope—yet here is the comforting thought connected with God's omniscience, that although He acts towards us upon His own judgment of what we are, and not what we think of ourselves, yet the remedy for sin, which He presents to us in Christ, is also not according to our narrow estimate of the value of Christ's work and person, but according to His own omniscient estimate of its *height*, and *depth*, and *length*, and *breadth*, which passeth knowledge. Yes! if when God tells us we are lost sinners, He means a ruin inconceivable by us, in its depth and

misery; so also, when He tells us we are saved in Christ, He means a salvation inconceivable in its comprehensiveness and blessedness. For just as no one sees his heart to be so bad as Omniscience knows it to be, so no one knows the perfections of Christ, in all their fulness, to be so glorious as they are. It will take eternity to reveal them to us!

4th, "*The Lord is there,*" as a present help and comfort to His people! Yes! always there at the right time, because He anticipates the effect of circumstances upon His Church. He knows what things will tell—the *extent* to which, and the *manner how*, they will tell. "The Lord is there" with His Church, in her circumstances, be what they may, teaching her "line upon line, precept upon precept." He is with her in the wilderness—leading her, bearing her on eagle's wings, eventually to bring her to Himself. He does not leave her, except to shew her, like Hezekiah, what is in her heart, and

to make her more prize His presence and help. He is with her, defending and keeping her “as the apple of an eye”—appearing especially for her in times of trial, and providing for her in unexampled and unexpected ways. He is there as her sympathising Husband—as her Omnipotent Lord—as the tender Partner of her sorrows—as the glad Partaker of her joys. He neither forgets nor forsakes her in trouble, but He sits by as a Refiner and Purifier; and when He sees His own blessed image formed and reflected in her, then He takes her to Himself, to be with Him in another state. And what a mercy to think, that the spiritual stones of which this city is composed are all fitted by God’s own workmanship for the very place they are to occupy! There is no believer so feeble in his faith, so obscure in his position, so insignificant among his fellows on earth, but he has his proper place assigned him in the heavenly temple, for which he is being prepared by the Lord. And as, at the building of Solo-

mon's temple, the materials were prepared at a distance, "and made ready before brought thither; so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building;" so all the lively stones, of which the heavenly city is composed, are made ready in the quarry of this life. It is here the preparation, the chipping, and the polishing of them goes on. They are all hewn from the same hard stony nature—all digged out of the same pit of a corrupt world. They are all "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works"—all squared by one rule of obedience to the Lord—all cemented together by the spirit of love—all dove-tailed into one body by the exercise of the various graces of the Spirit; and when they are taken from the din, and dust, and turmoil of this life, it is to be in joy, and peace, and love for *ever*. It is, moreover, worthy of notice, that in the tabernacle there were no windows—the light was all from within. In Solomon's temple,

too, "the windows were of narrow lights." So the believer walks not by the light of this world, but chiefly by that "candle of the Lord," which by the Holy Spirit has been re-lighted in his heart, and by the Word of God, which is now become "a light unto his feet and a lamp to his path;" and hereafter it is to be entirely so, when "the Lord shall be his everlasting light, and his God his glory."

Let us not, then, complain of our trials; but try to bear them patiently—yea, bravely. "The Lord is there." He is in them, and will be *with us in them*. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust," nor without a "needs be," and a suitable object. And if only we can bring ourselves to believe "the Lord is there," *all is well*; yea, *blessed*. This is your *comfort*. When God looks upon the Church, He looks on *Jesus*, and sees *her* in Him—sees her "a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He sees each member "complete in Christ"—every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, "The Lord is there" *as the future full portion and bliss of His people!*

Whether this state shall be ushered in by the trump of God waking us from the dead, or whether we shall live to hear the "shout" with which "the Lord will descend from heaven," it will be one of everlasting blessedness and glory. To be with Christ—to see Him as He is—to be like Him—to share His glory,—this is the believer's portion!—an *everlasting* portion; one, *never* to be diminished in its brightness—*never* to be diminished in extent, enjoyment, or duration; one, where all pain, and sorrow, and tears shall cease *for ever*; and be among the former things which have all passed away;—where, if we remember the trials of earth, it will only be to make us magnify the grace which overruled them all for good, and now makes our happiness seem all the brighter—where, in addition to the rapture of clasping again to our hearts those whom we have known and loved in the Lord, we shall mingle with

the saints of every age and clime, “with the spirits of just men made perfect”—where, while hearts are warm, and true, and loving to each other, we shall be filled with an exceeding love *to Christ*, who *gave us all*—where we shall be able to unite the “Alleluia” of praise with the “Amen” of perfect acquiescence—where “the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

O my beloved brethren, think on these things! Think of the *everlasting* blessings God has prepared for you! That as Jehovah is *eternal*, so what He gives is *eternal* too. Think of the *everlasting* provision which He has made for you, in the death and resurrection of Christ, as “Jehovah-jireh”—of the “*everlasting* righteousness” He has provided for you, as “Jehovah-tsidkenu”—of the *everlasting* peace He gives you, as “Jehovah-shalom”—of the *everlasting* victory He has won for you over death and Satan, as “Je-

hovah-nissi"—and of the *everlasting* glory of His presence, as "Jehovah-shammah!" What has He not done for you, and all that love Him? Surely I may say to you, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Before I close, listen to one word of warning. Remember, such of you as may be living without much reference to God, that His eye is ever upon you, searching your most secret thoughts and ways. It is not a question whether He sees you; this is fixed and inevitable: but it is a question whether you will resolutely determine to live *as before Him*, giving yourself up to His service—whether you will invite His presence, desire it always, live as in His sight—in short, whether you will strive to "set the Lord always before you?" Strive to love the Lord—to hate evil. Remember the power of Satan in these last days. He appears now, often as an angel of light, with disguises so specious, that, if it were possible, the very

elect would be deceived. He is always endeavouring to pass off a counterfeit for the real. For example, if there is a Church of the living God which is true and real, Satan is ever trying to rear a false church. If Christ has a Bride adorned and beautified for Himself, there is a painted harlot in the world who is audaciously claiming this place of honour. If God has a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, Satan is sedulously building up a Babylon. Oh, beware of her delicacies! If there are those who bear the seal of the living God in their foreheads; there are also those who have the mark of the beast. Pray that you may judge righteous judgment in these matters—that you may choose heartily for the Lord. Pray that you may be led to take the road “that leadeth unto life,” and give, as a reason to those that ask you, “The Lord is there;” till at length, being carried to that city of God, you shall no longer say, “The Lord is *there*,” but “The *Lord* is *here*,” and “I am ever *with the Lord*.”

THE CHRISTIAN RACE:

A SERIES OF LECTURES,

PREACHED IN PORTMAN CHAPEL, BAKER STREET,

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BY THE

REV. J. W. REEVE, A.M.,

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.



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THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

O FOR a Faith that will not shrink,
Though press'd by every foe ;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe :

That will not murmur nor complain,
Beneath the chast'ning rod ;
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God :

A Faith that shines more bright and clear,
When tempests rage without ;
That, when in danger, knows no fear,
In darkness, feels no doubt :

That bears, unmoved, the world's dread frown,
Nor heeds its scornful smile ;
That seas of trouble cannot drown,
Nor Satan's arts beguile :

A Faith that keeps the narrow way,
Till life's last hour is fled,
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Lights up the dying bed.

Lord, give us such a Faith as this ;
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste, e'en here, the hallow'd bliss
Of our eternal home.



LECTURE I.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

THE subject of my present course of lectures is the “Christian race,” as set forth in the first two verses of chap. xii. It is one of deep importance, because it is a race appointed of God. All have to run who would not miss eternal life. It behoves us, therefore, not merely to know the principle on which alone it can be run, but which will successfully meet the difficulties through which it must be run. In this race there is no exemption. All must run who would

win. Victory is not necessarily sure to the swift, but to the patient who persevere to the end. The thing is "*so to run* that we may obtain." I shall divide the subject as follows:—

- I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN RACE.
- II. ITS ILLUSTRATION IN THE WITNESSES.
- III. THE PREPARATION TO RUN SUCCESSFULLY.
- IV. THE RACE ITSELF, AND THE SPIRIT IN
WHICH IT IS TO BE RUN.
- V. THE ATTITUDE OF THE RACER.
- VI. THE PROSPECT BEFORE HIM.

We have now to consider the first of these:
THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

This is Faith.

From the begining of the world—in all ages of it—under all dispensations of grace—all alterations of worship, faith has been the only principle of living unto God—of resisting and overcoming sin—of obtaining promises—of inheriting eternal life. This chapter, in telling us what faith has done in

ages that are past, encourages us to believe what it will do in our own circumstances, if we exercise it really. We see it can do "all things that pertain to life and godliness" and service of God here, and all things that will secure everlasting rest hereafter. Without faith nothing can be done in the spiritual life, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." But, blessed be God, it is also written, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Faith, therefore, is the principle which must be brought to bear in the Christian race, for it is the principle of the Christian life. It is said, in the text, to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" *i. e.*, it is a principle which makes the things hoped for substantial and influential realities even here; which sees and feels the power "of things not seen," and brings them to bear on "things seen;" so that by it a believer is constantly making the promises of the Word, and the prospects of eternity, tell on the

things of time—thus tasting in the grace given here, the glory that is yet to be revealed.

I need not, on this occasion, bring before you the elementary parts of Christianity. I shall start from the point of justification—when a man first begins to serve God, and sets out in the Christian race. A man must be a believer in Jesus Christ, and therefore justified in the sight of God, before he starts on this race. It is no mere worldly race, in which the zeal of the flesh, or a desire of outstripping others, or any other carnal motive, will make men run a long way, and with great earnestness too. It is no mere struggle for human glory, for the course will often lie through things which “will stain the pride of all human glory;” nor is it a contest for things that perish in the using, for it often calls for the sacrifice of all earthly hopes, and demands the giving up of that which sheds a halo round our very life; but it is a race for “an inheritance incorruptible

and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It must be run in a spirit of separation from the world, and of simple child-like dependence on Christ. And very much of the conflict will go on, far out of the sight of men, in the narrow precincts of our own heart.

You may ask, What is the object of that faith which qualifies men for this race, and keeps them constant in it, notwithstanding the difficulties with which they have to contend? The ultimate object of faith is God. The immediate saving object of faith, as revealed in the New Testament, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If you look at those places in Scripture in which a statement of faith in Christ is recorded, you will usually find it with this addition, "the Son of God;" *e. g.*, Peter's (Matt. xvi. 16, and John vi. 69); Martha's (John xi. 27); John's (John xx. 31); the Eunuch's (Acts viii. 37); Paul's (Acts ix. 20): and John, speaking of triumphant faith, says (1 John v. 5), "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that

Jesus is the Son of God?" And it is very important to acknowledge His deity, for this only gives efficiency to His atonement, subdues the heart, and makes man obedient. This requires the power of the Holy Ghost to effect (1 Cor. xii. 3).

To believe that Jesus was the Son of Mary is mere natural faith. It is not more difficult than to believe in the existence of any other remarkable person. Paul believed this, but it only awakened rage and persecution against His people; and it was not until he was on his way to Damascus that he believed Christ's deity. Then it was his heart was humbled, and he said, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" But to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, God and Man in one Christ, so that we are humbled before Him, and give Him our hearts, and accept Him for all He is, and has done; this requires the power of the Holy Ghost. And further, we must remember, true faith leans on the *person of Christ*; not on the doctrines

and system of Christianity merely, which He taught—although these are very important in their places—but on Christ personally. Hence the difference between believing the Crucifixion and Christ crucified. It can be no greater difficulty, to the reader of history, to believe that Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem, than that King Charles was beheaded at Whitehall; but to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, offered for the sins of the world, is beyond the power of nature. It is not possible to the natural man, but is a spiritual act taught of the Holy Ghost. Hence the apostles in their preaching spoke of “Christ crucified.” “*Him* have ye slain.” “*Him* hath God raised up.” It was not usually the statement of the doctrine of the Crucifixion, or of the Resurrection, but the statement of a Person crucified and raised. Now, this faith is said, in the text, to be “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;” that is, it is such an argumentative conviction, and gives such

power to the soul, that it makes "things hoped for" substantial and real; and gives such certainty to "things not seen," that sight itself could scarcely add anything to the evidence. It is such a proof that it refutes all objections, and the man acts in quiet confidence of what is promised. Now, it is the very glory of Christianity that it has to do with "things not seen" by the world. As it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). This is the principle necessary to run the Christian race—a principle which has to do with "things not seen," and which brings them to bear on "things seen." For instance, Faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen," is thus able to see the glorious invisible things of God, and of His grace, and to bring them nearer to the soul. This was the secret of Moses' resolu-

tion in separating himself from the court of Pharaoh, and casting in his lot with the children of Israel. By faith, he "saw Him who is invisible;" and not only this, but somewhat of what God is, and of what God has to give, and of what God promises, and of what God will do for them that really trust Him.

Again, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Thus, the blood and righteousness and resurrection of Christ, become a reality. Union with Christ is a reality. The believer recognises his interest in Christ; he identifies himself with Christ; he can say, looking at His mediatorial work, When Christ died, I died—when Christ rose, I rose—when Christ ascended, I ascended—as Christ sits in heaven, I sit in heaven. For not only am I told that God, who is rich in mercy, hath quickened believers with Christ, and hath raised them up together, and made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 5, 6), but also, that "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). Thus we

see pardon becomes a reality. Christ's love, Christ's strength, Christ's protection, Christ's salvation, are all blessed realities. The believer has them—they are his! Do we ask how and why? He knows whom he has believed!

The same may be said of trials and temptations. "All things are yours." How this smooths the way in every trouble! The believer may say of troubles as they arise, "This is mine—given to me of God. It contains a secret blessing: let me then not fear it, as it comes from the hand of my Father; but let me try to deal with it wisely, prayerfully, in the sight and strength of God—bowing my head humbly when I should bend—standing up manfully when I should resist—feeling Christ is with me through it all, and will bring me out more than conqueror."

Dear brethren, think; all things have been considered by Him who bought you with His blood. He purchased you out of all

difficulties and temptations; He foresaw all that would befall you, and yet He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou gavest Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Faith sees this excellency in Christ—this love, and power, and faithfulness to His purpose; and in proportion to our knowledge of His character will be our confidence in Him. And this very principle which keeps the heart on Christ, as all in all, relieves the soul from all apprehension as to the result, and enables it to leave all to God. It is occupied not in what the result of a trial will be, but rather in ascertaining how faith should behave herself under it. It asks, "How shall I shew I love, and trust, and serve, and honour Jesus?" This is the thing to occupy the heart of a believer, and this lightens every other trouble. It is a great truth, that in taking up Christ's burden all other burdens fall off. Yes! in put-

ting on Christ's yoke, and making Him our own, we find strength of mind to meet all the trials of life with calmness. For the believing soul can always shelter itself in this—"My God knows best—He sees the end from the beginning—He sees the steps, the hindrances, the difficulties, and out of them all the Lord will deliver me." What a shield is faith in the practice of life! It worketh by love; and oh, how we can trust when we love! Nay, how hard it is to doubt whom we love! What confidence we repose in them. We seem able to leave all to them. Such is the power of faith! Such is the value of the principle of the Christian race. Let us see how it operates. The Christian race is run—

1. *In a prescribed course.* It is determined by Him who has fixed the bounds of our habitation, as well as the length of our course. It is as various as our age, our circumstances, our habits, dispositions, position in life, &c., but it is suitable to us. It may be prominent before the world, or utterly

secluded from it; but all our relations of life—public, private, domestic, social, &c.—will tell upon it. The course of believers is not the same: they are not contending against each other, but against sin, as embodied in the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this race believers start from different points, at different hours, under different circumstances; but their course is exactly prescribed by the Lord: and it is only as they bear this in mind, and believe their course therefore to be the best, that they will run successfully and to God's glory. We see, therefore, one point which faith ensures, viz., to make us contented where we are, and do the best we can. Now, Satan will use all his artifices to allure the believer from his prescribed course; and if he cannot tempt him into actual departure from it, he will try to make him dissatisfied with God's appointments. He will try to make him think the course of another is easier, and more suitable than that which he is called to follow; and that if he had more

of this blessing and of that, it would be better for him. But here again comes in faith. It shews us Christ, our sovereign Lord, on whose shoulder is the government of all things, doing all for the glory of God, and teaching the believer how his own glory is inseparably bound up with the glory of Christ. Faith brings *the end* (the point never seen nor considered by the world) to bear on the appointments of God, and thus is able to trust God as truly for the steps which conduct to that end, as for the end itself; and, moreover, is able to look at Christ's purpose, instead of at the circumstances in which it is placed. The course may be rough, very rough, or the reverse, as God sees best; but faith quiets the believer, and enables him to feel "all is well;" to submit humbly, saying, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good;" and thus strengthens him to do the best he can under the circumstances. He bows his head to the Lord, and is at peace.

2. *The race is run according to pre-*

scribed rules. These are laid down in the Holy Scriptures. Faith, therefore, in God's written Word is indispensable to success. I need not say a word on the importance of believing the inspiration of Scripture. If we cannot heartily accept the Bible as God's Word, it appears to me we have nothing to stand on, and leave ourselves without hope, with nothing to guide or console us. But if there be such a thing as the Christian race, and appointed by the Lord, which all must run or perish, then the rules, according to which it must be run, are in God's Word, which is the declaration of His will in Christ Jesus concerning us. This must be studied, therefore, in order that we may know what to do, and it must be trusted, too, implicitly. There must be no self-willed departure from it, under the plea of expediency or human judgment of things; but Scripture is to be simply and honestly followed, remembering "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." What others do is no rule

for the believer. I repeat, the believer is not competing with men. He does not lose this race because others are ahead of him, nor win it because others are behind. He is contending against sin in all its forms. His adversaries are Satan, with all his wiles—the flesh, with all its indulgences and allurements—the world, with all its heartless falsehoods: and how can a believer meet and resist and overcome these, but in the way God has prescribed, by the blood, and strength, and righteousness of Christ? And how can he avail himself of these, but by faith? If a man believe in Christ, then these blessings are his own—to use freely on every emergency; but implicit obedience to the Word of God is necessary, and this is the result of believing that the race must be run according to God's prescribed rules.

3. But this race has to be run *in the face of difficulties!* Observe here, the adaptation of faith. Its peculiarity is, that it is “the evidence of things not seen.” It sees “things

not seen," through "things that are seen." Life itself presents a thousand actual difficulties in the Christian course; faith sees them all removed and overcome. Mountains stand in the path; faith pierces them and sees the course made plain—not necessarily easy or smooth, but plain—so there is no doubt what to do, nor may there be hesitation in doing it. Faith sees the power of God, and difficulties disappear. Faith brings Christ into our circumstances, and the question is no longer between us and trial, but between trial and the strength of Christ. Because the real privilege of faith is this, "It is not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and "It is God which worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." And it is "the things not seen" which are "eternal," being brought to bear on "things seen which are temporal," which gives a man the victory. It was, no doubt, a hard thing for Moses to turn his back on the pleasures of Egypt. How did he do it? "He had re-

spect unto the recompense of the reward." Faith opens a man's eyes to the character and love of Christ, and the believer sees in Christ more for him than can be against him.

The help that is in Christ for time of trial is not seen by the world, and is therefore neglected; but faith sees it, in spite of all things that seem to be against it, and rests on it, and is blessed in it. . Faith, in realising union with Christ, realises the substance of the text, and sees deliverance in the midst of trial, and victory and success in spite of all difficulties.

4. Again, observe how faith enables a man, in face of difficulties, *to plod on and on in the path of obedience*, not listening to suggestions of the flesh, but hearing only the command of God, having no doubt about the result, although not knowing how it is to be brought about. "Faith," as Luther remarks, "has nothing to do with 'whys and wherefores.'" It goes on and does, believing the God who commands, and leaving the results

with Him. What an abundance of difficulties did Noah's faith carry him through! The Lord told him to build an ark. Unbelief would have urged, "Lord, I cannot do it. I know not how. I have been a preacher many years, but not a carpenter, much less a ship-builder; and if I, all ignorant of the art, were to set about it, how the world will jeer, and what evil things will it say of Thee for employing such as I am! And, suppose I should build the ark, how shall I collect the creatures? How get them into the ark—how feed them—how prevent their tearing me and each other to pieces?" Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties, "Noah prepared an ark." He did it by faith: he ran his race, hard as it was, successfully by faith.

Think of the difficulties the flesh might have urged in the case of Abraham's trial. Think of how much *expediency* might have advanced in the case of the three children and Daniel, to enable them to escape respectively the fiery furnace, and the lion's den.

But their faith looked away from the difficulty straight to the Lord, and they were triumphantly delivered! This is the way especially to honour God: to see the protecting, delivering arm of the Lord in the face of all difficulties.

But we must not think it an easy thing thus to trust God. It is a hard thing. It is far easier to try and help one's self, than to sit still and believe in God's help. And perhaps harder than all, to exercise simple faith in God, while we are humbly and diligently using means: accounting the means valuable *only* as we recognise God in them. But this is what we must aim at, to bring faith into common things, so that we may have it at hand for uncommon things. Life is full of hard and trying things, and we need to be prepared. God has told us the principle on which alone we can go through life to His honour and our salvation; and if we are looking to Him for it, we shall not be disappointed.

But I need not proceed further. You know the principle which must be in continual exercise in the Christian race, and which is applicable to all the conceivable circumstances of it. Cultivate dependence on Christ. Bring "things not seen" to bear on "things seen," and you will triumph. You will find your path illumined by light from above, and your heart cheered by the songs of the Celestial City. Faith will surely do as much in New Testament times as ever it did in Old Testament times.

Read through this chapter from which my text is taken, and see what mighty things faith can accomplish. How it will resist great temptations—do great things—suppress strong fears—subdue heavy griefs—impart to you a pilgrim-spirit—keep your hearts fixed in the midst of all the turnings and changes of your course—make you faithful and true in all your relations and obligations, &c., and all by bringing eternity and the things of it to bear on time and the

things of it. Oh, when a man realises that he has to do with eternity—when this becomes a practical recognised fact of his existence, what an influence it has! When he understands heartily that everything he does tells on eternity, and that for all he must give account, how important things become! Trifles, as he once thought them, are so no longer. They become weighty and solemn, because they make their mark for eternity. And when, moreover, we realise the true secret of the life of faith, union with Christ, how strong it makes us! “It is not I, but Christ;” and then what is too hard for us? Faith can do all things. Depend on Christ, and all is well. Your race may be long, difficult, weary; so full of strange trials that it shall be a series of surprises and sudden dangers; but faith shall spring above the changes, and realise the goal. The series of surprises and dangers shall be also a series of escapes and deliverances, and faith shall enable you so to run that you may

obtain. But never forget where your true strength lies. It is in Christ, in whom we have righteousness and strength. Go on in this might. "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Cleave steadily to Him, and you shall find that faith will do for you all it has done in the salvation of others.



ITS ILLUSTRATION IN THE WITNESSES.

THE Son of God goes forth to war
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar !—
Who follows in His train ?

Who best can drink His cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears His cross below,
He follows in His train.

The Martyr first, whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave ;
Who saw his Master in the sky,
And call'd on Him to save.

Like Him, with pardon on his tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
He pray'd for them that did the wrong !—
Who follows in His train ?

A noble army—men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice
In robes of light array'd.

They climb'd the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain.
O God ! to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.

LECTURE II.

ITS ILLUSTRATION IN THE WITNESSES.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

“ Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”

WE read (Rom. xv. 4), “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope;” and the Holy Ghost has graciously given us, in Heb. xi., a list of believing heroes, whose trials were severe, but whose faith was real and strong, and who came off victorious in their conflict. This is our encouragement. The strongest need it. The weakest may be helped by it; and, being a promise made by the Lord, we may be sure

it is not only needful, but will be useful, if rightly employed. The words of our text are an exhortation to believers generally (for Paul includes himself with the Hebrews), to apply to their own peculiar circumstances, in the Christian race, the principle illustrated in chapter xi., and which had done such wonders in the cases cited. I do not think the term, "witnesses," refers only to chapter xi., but to all the saints of the Old Testament, whose faith is recorded in Scripture, and from whose examples, in the application of faith, we are to learn how to use it ourselves.

The expression, "cloud of witnesses," is, in this sense, very instructive. It means a great many. Some, the Apostle had named, but it includes all those alluded to from verse 32 to 39. He heaped them together as a cloud. A cloud is a beautiful emblem. A cloud is formed by vapours exhaled by the sun from the earth, and which are returned again in fertilising showers. So this cloud of witnesses were all attracted from earth to heaven

by the Sun of Righteousness, and the contemplation of them, as now with Christ in joy and felicity, but once here, as we are now, struggling in the flesh, will be as a heavenly dew refreshing our soul in the dust and heat of conflict, and urging us to be "followers of them who now, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." The term, "witnesses," may be understood in two senses.

1. Of such as look on when a thing is done by others, and give their testimony about it. In this sense, the idea is that of spectators, who, by their applause and notice, encouraged those that contended in the public games. Thus Paul charged Timothy in his work, not only "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ," to whom he must give account, but also before the "elect angels," who were witnesses, spectators, of what he was doing in his ministry. In this sense the apostles were witnesses. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all

that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts x. 38-41). "And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people" (Acts xiii. 31).

But there is another sense in which the term may be used.

2. Of such as do a thing themselves, and thus, in their own persons, bear witness to the power of a principle by which a thing is done. Thus, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Our gracious Lord exhibited the power of truth. So also God's

people, in Isa. xliii. 10, are said to be His “witnesses.” Thus also martyrs, who have laid down their own necks for the truth, and those mentioned in chap. xi, are “witnesses.” What they testified to, or were witnesses to, is, that faith will carry a man through all he may be called to do and suffer in the way of obedience to God—that it is best to obey God, whatever a man may suffer in consequence—and that true faith will be victorious, notwithstanding the malice of the world or the temptations of Satan. Now, to have such witnesses to appeal to, will strengthen our own faith; and it will be a great encouragement to have such persons to tell us, by their own victorious example, of the folly of being afraid—of the misery and sin of hesitating to obey the Word of God, and of the falsehood of Satan’s temptations. If they could speak to us, they would say, “I was once tried as you are; sore tempted by sin and unbelief, and hindered in running the race set before me; but faith enabled me to per-

severe, and carried me through, and I have entered into rest." Yes! these have gone through the trial, and have come out victorious. This is the sense of the term "witnesses" which I prefer: not spectators, but persons who are witnesses for the same truth. Because although competitors in a race may be urged to great exertion by the applause of the spectators, yet "the honour which cometh from man" is not the spring of the Christian combatant; but when we see what faith has carried others through, then we are encouraged to look to Jesus, for what He did in them He can do in us.

Let us look at this encouragement, which the illustration of the principle in the witnesses affords us.

In the New Testament, faith is the grace which Christ approves, and which grace, when He comes again, will be very rare. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8.) So in the Old Testament, faith is the grace

most commended. For example, Abel was a righteous man, Moses a meek man, Samson a strong man, Gideon a brave man; but it is not for these qualities they are mentioned, but for faith. "They all obtained a good report through faith" (Heb. xi. 39).

Look at the testimony faith enabled them to leave behind. They being dead yet speak to us. Our circumstances can never be more trying than theirs: and the power that sustained them can keep us also.

Faith is the prime grace, for it makes a man a Christian. It brings Christ and the soul together. It is the instrumentality by which the Lord lays the believer's sins on Christ, and Christ's righteousness on the believer. It covers the defects of all other graces, and makes the man "accepted in the Beloved," "complete in Christ." In Heb. xi. we have witnesses of two kinds—some, famous for what they did; some, for what they suffered: and as we are called to do

and suffer for the gospel's sake, let us try and learn of them. Let us consider—

1. *What faith does.* It is an active principle, always working by love (Gal. v. 6); that is, always doing good, not harm, and not merely executing, but originating good. There is a certain activity which is often mischievous, because it is impulsive and inconsiderate, and has no definite object, which is the result of feeling rather than of principle; but faith counts the cost, is calm and reflective. It is written (Isa. xxviii. 16), "He that believeth shall not make haste;" *i. e.*, shall not do things otherwise than considerately and sedately, and shall be striving ever for good. It seems to realise the text, "Trust in the Lord, and do good." Faith is a grace which really acts, which tries to do good in all things. It can, so to speak, turn its hand to anything. "All things are possible to him that believeth." Not this particular thing only, or that, but all things. So that when there is an opportunity of doing

good, faith is ready to enter in and act. Now, faith goes forth in the might of God's power—in the strength of Christ. The promise is made to it of doing the greatest things. What said our Lord to His disciples? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John xiv. 12). Accordingly, we find all the great things done by men, as recorded in the Scriptures, ascribed to faith. And the reason is, God does much to honour that grace which ascribes all power to Him. Faith takes hold of God's strength. God honours faith, and shews it does not trust Him in vain!

Look now, for example, at some on whom the Holy Ghost makes no comment, in chap. xi., but whose names are mentioned because their faith was great—as Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel. Their deeds of faith are recorded

in other parts of Scripture. Look at others, whose names are not mentioned in chap. xi., but whose acts are—who, through faith, “subdued kingdoms,” as the Judges did; who “wrought righteousness,” as Samuel did, appealing to Israel, and saying, “Witness against me, whose ass or whose ox have I taken?” who obtained promises—not the great promise of the Messiah, for this (ver. 39 says) “they received not”—but the promises made of victories, deliverances, kingdoms; “stopped the mouths of lions,” as Daniel did; “quenched the violence of fire,” as the three children did; “escaped the edge of the sword,” as Elijah and Elisha did; “out of weakness were made strong,” as Hezekiah was; “waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,” as Joshua often did; “and women received their dead raised to life again,” as the widow of Sarepta and the Shunammite did.

Nor must we always judge of the strength of faith by the nature of the act in which it

is exhibited. Faith is not necessarily feeble, because the act itself may seem small by comparison. The principle may be very grand, although its illustration may be very poor in the eye of the world. No doubt, the two mites which the widow cast into the treasury seemed small in the eyes of those who cast in of their abundance; but in the eyes of the Lord, who looketh on the heart, it was more than all the others gave, for she gave all the living that she had. She parted with all her earthly means, because she had faith in God; whereas the others gave only of their abundance, which did not necessarily imply any faith in God at all.

Apply this principle to the common things of life; and he will be found to be the strong believer, not who does the greatest things in the eye of men, but who exercises most dependence upon God in everything. And to exercise such trust in God, in the midst of earthly abundance, as though we had nothing, is no less honouring to God, than

being really poor, to believe that in Him we possess all things. And if, in Scripture, we are taught that the way to be ruler over much is to be faithful in a little, so the way to do great things is to bring faith to bear on the little things of life. Let faith see God in everything. Do not commit a sin because it is a little one. Do not neglect a duty because it may appear a trivial one. Do not think a small matter above the exercise of faith, but remember it is the principle of the Christian life, applicable to all things, great and small. Faith will do great things when it is real. It may be very weak. Gideon's faith was weak. You remember how he required sign after sign, before he could be satisfied to trust God (Judges vi. 36-40); first, the dew upon the fleece and the ground dry; and then the dew upon the ground and the fleece dry. Barak's faith was weak (Judges iv. 6, &c.); he would not go forth against the enemy unless the prophetess Deborah accompanied him. But in

both cases their faith was genuine; they trusted God, and did great things! And if men do not great things for God now, why is it? They lack faith. Why are we not more holy? Because we do not remember constantly that God's eye is upon us. Why do we not make greater head against the world and the things of it? Because we trust too much in our own strength, and not enough in God's; because we look too much at the difficulties to be overcome, and forget the power of God; because we look too much at the sufferings to be endured in the conflict with sin, and forget the support and strength and comfort which God can give.

If you want an illustration of the way in which faith can meet difficulties, look at Abraham. He took his stand on God's promise, and was at rest. The way to heaven is clogged with many difficulties; but the way to meet them is to regard them as so many occasions for the exercise of faith—so many opportunities for the display of God's

power. It is not difficulties that shall stop us, but only want of faith. No sooner does a believer begin to set out in earnest for heaven, but discouragements arise, and Satan tries to hinder him. When the children of Israel began to agitate the question of going to do sacrifice to the Lord, Pharaoh doubled their tasks. It is thus with young believers, their difficulties seem to increase; but the secret is to look, not at them, but to Christ. But observe Abraham. He had a promise that his seed should be as numerous as the stars of heaven, and he believed it (Gen. xv. 5). Now, if Abraham had looked on the promises with reference to the means, he would have said, "It is impossible;" but as Paul says (Rom. iv. 19-21), "Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and

being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." He rested on the promise of God ; and according to his faith, so it was. And the same thing is said (Heb. xi. 11) of Sarah : "She judged Him faithful who had promised."

There is another point of importance which these witnesses teach us—namely, to wait the Lord's time. Abraham did this for fifteen or twenty years. But some there are who think, if mercy does not come at such a time, and in such a way, it is all over. Their patience is all gone. But patience is an important grace. Trials are sent to exercise it. Yea, we read, "tribulation worketh patience." The want of it is dishonouring to God. He has all time, as well as all means, at His disposal: and He who made Israel's captivity expire on the very day (Ex. xii. 41), and opened a way through the sea, will never fail in His truth now to them that trust Him.

Has God made to us promises of blessing?

Has He promised, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. vi. 14)? Do we find many things both within and without against it? Do we find sin abounding, the world prevailing? What is the course to take? Why, not to pore on our sins, but to lean on the promise. Look to Christ, the source of power. If Job found it necessary to make a covenant with his eyes; if David prayed (Ps. cxix. 37), "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," so must we turn away our eyes from those difficulties and hindrances which tempt us to doubt the truth of a promise. We must take our stand on the faithfulness of God, throw ourselves on Jesus Christ, and lean on His love and truth and strength, remembering "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." Think of Abraham; he did not stand poring on the old age of himself and Sarah, or he would have been staggered, but "he was strong in faith, giving glory to God;" resting on the promise. And

faith is just that principle which, piercing through the difficulties, sees the fulfilment of a promise : it is “the evidence of things not seen,” in spite of what we do see.

2. But observe, in the second place, *What faith can suffer*. “Women received their dead raised to life again : and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that they might obtain a better resurrection : and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented : (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Heb. xi. 35-39). “They would not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection ;” that is, they had an eye

to the last, the great resurrection, which is a far better resurrection than any temporary resurrection from death, which deliverance from great suffering might secure. They suffered great things just because they believed in "the better resurrection." The world, indeed, was not worthy of such characters. They are seldom understood, often misunderstood and misrepresented; but they are dear to the Lord, because they are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. We must remember that suffering or trial, and the feeling it deeply, is no evidence of the absence of faith; rather is it the reverse, and furnishes occasion for the exercise of faith. Paul's sufferings were very severe, as recorded in 1 Cor. iv. 11, and 2 Cor. xi., but he was very precious to the Lord, and his faith was real and victorious. His sufferings did not hinder his labours. His trials did not prevent his working. Nay, says he, "I laboured more abundantly than they all;" but still, jealous lest he should be misunder-

stood, he adds, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." But we must remember it is set forth in Scripture (Phil. i. 29) as a privilege to suffer, and in this suffering, faith will sustain, and faith only. Human resolution and firmness of character may induce dogged endurance, but faith alone can suffer humbly, and meekly, and according to the will of God, and persevere to the end. David says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. xxvii. 13). The more a man can lean on the Word of God, the more and the better he will be able to endure; the more he will be able to resist sin, and all its allurements, as Moses did (Heb. xi. 24, 25), and as did those mentioned in ver. 35, "not accepting deliverance."

You may not (through the tender dealings of God) be called to suffer as they did; but if you are determinedly set to serve God, to live separate from the world, to cultivate all holiness, to maintain His truth against adver-

saries, to walk in love in the midst of evil men, you will have to suffer, and you will need the same power of faith. You will have to maintain a conflict against sin within and without—against unholy thoughts, unkind feelings, evil tempers, pride, vanity, and every hurtful lust. You will find there is suffering still in the Christian life. If there be no suffering, there is the greatest reason to doubt whether there is any real Christian principle—whether you are not swimming with the stream, instead of against it.

We see, then, the illustration of faith in the witnesses mentioned. They did great things and suffered great things. Yet, I repeat, their conduct is recorded, not for their works' but for their faith's sake—to teach and encourage us. They had the same infirmities we have, they lived in the same world, they had the same evil hearts, they had the same great adversary, but they had fewer privileges. They did not live under a dispensation of the Spirit in the New Testa-

ment sense. Still their faith enabled them to conquer.

And there is another thing which shews the value of faith; namely, that when once established in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, it seems to obliterate all defects of character before God. We read of David, and Rahab, and Samson, as illustrations of faith; but no mention is made here of their sins and wickedness. These were all blotted out for ever. They were pardoned, and remembered no more. I am not unaware that some persons do not regard all the characters mentioned in Heb. xi. as illustrations of *saving faith*, but merely of such faith as can do great things; but the Holy Spirit does not confound things that differ, and there is nothing in the chapter to lead us to suppose that the same quality of faith does not attach to all the characters mentioned. Now, we are to remember this "cloud of witnesses," who did God's work in their day, that we may be encouraged to do what we have to

do for God in our day, and to do it on the same principle and in the same spirit. Let us believe like Abraham, "the father of the faithful," and our faith will not stagger. Are we called to the special exercise of meekness? we may profitably study the character of the "man Moses, who was meek above all the men that were on the face of the earth." Are we called to fight the battles of the Lord? we may learn from the valour of "Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully." Would we behave ourselves wisely? let us think of "the man after God's own heart." Would we be bold even before kings? let us learn of Elijah standing before Ahab. Need we lessons of filial obedience and piety? we may gather them from "Ruth, the Moabitess"—of modesty and dignity? from Esther the Queen. These all stand out in the Word of God as witnesses to the value of that principle by which alone we can run our Christian race successfully. Would you be victorious in this

race? then, above all, study Jesus Christ more. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 5.) The more you know of Jesus Christ and His excellency, the stronger will be your faith. Let it be rooted and grounded in Him—Him personally—not in doctrine or things merely, but in Him. This is the way to be loving and active in doing good. Who so hard, and selfish, and shut up, and exclusive, as those who, possessed of an accurate knowledge of doctrine, are yet destitute of the knowledge of Christ?

Strive to believe. The more you believe the Word of God, in the face of difficulties, the more you honour and please Him. God will trust him with much, who trusts much to God. Encourage each other in faith. Help each other, by telling of what the Lord hath done for your souls. Bring faith to bear on daily life: in common duties, it will ennoble them; in little things, it will make them

valuable ; in hard things, it will make them easy. Doing small things by faith, is the way to do great things. And, above all, never forget, without Christ you can do nothing ; but by faith in Him you can do all things, as chapter 11th abundantly proves.

THE PREPARATION TO RUN SUCCESSFULLY.

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace ;
Rise from transitory things
Toward heaven, thy native place.
Sun and moon and stars decay ;
Time shall soon this earth remove ;
Rise, my soul, and haste away
To seats prepared above.

Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course ;
Fire, ascending, seeks the sun ;
Both speed them to their source.
So a soul that's born of God,
Pants to view His glorious face ;
Upward tends to His abode,
To rest in His embrace.

Cease, ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,
Press onward to the prize ;
Soon your Saviour will return,
Triumphant in the skies.
Yet a season, and you know
Happy entrance will be given ;
All your sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven.

LECTURE III.

THE PREPARATION TO RUN SUCCESSFULLY.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”

THE struggle involved in the Christian race is expressed in Scripture by various terms, all of which, however, convey the idea of our strength being taxed to the utmost. It is called “a conflict” (Phil. i. 30), “a fight” (1 Tim. vi. 12), “a wrestling” (Eph. vi. 12); and as the stake for which we run is eternal life, we are urged to put forth all our power. As, for instance, we are exhorted to “strive” (Luke xiii. 14), as one contending for his life; to “labour” (Heb. iv. 11), to “be vigilant” (1 Pet. v. 8), to “give all diligence”

(2 Pet. i. 5); and the secret is, being “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. vi. 10).

In preparing for the Christian race, a man should not only have a clear view of the object to be attained—eternal life; and of the way in which it is to be attained, through faith in Christ; but he should also have counted the cost of contending. This is the course our Lord recommends (Luke xiv. 28, &c.) He should first have satisfied himself of the value of the prize, and then made up his mind to win it. This should be established within him, as his guiding, governing purpose. His language should be, “By God’s grace, I will so run as to obtain. This is my one object, to which all other things shall yield and be made subservient. For this, I live; for this, I run; and for this, I have made up my mind to ‘lay aside’ everything that may hinder.” The idea to be illustrated is not the actually running the race, but the giving up all that hinders our

running to the greatest advantage. And this we must do cheerfully and willingly—as cheerfully and unhesitatingly as a man would put off such articles of heavy clothing as would be likely to hamper him in running a foot race.

Let us look at the terms used.

1st, “*Let us lay aside;*” that is, put off. The word is used of the murderers of Stephen, who put off their clothes in order the better to execute their dreadful deed (Acts vii. 58). It is used, too, of “putting off,” and “putting away,” and “laying apart,” and “aside,” various sins (Eph. iv. 22, 25; Col. iii. 8; James i. 21; 1 Peter ii. 1). The idea is common in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. As, for example, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;” (Isa. i. 16). And so very important is this subject of getting rid of what hinders our spiritual progress, that our Lord says, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and

cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. v. 29, 30). The "profit" lies in getting rid of the offending member, dear as it may be; and it clearly teaches, that one reason why people do not succeed better in the Christian race is, that impediments are not removed. They are not resolute and determined enough against what hinders. If the sacrifice demanded be costly, the hindrance is often allowed to remain. The real reason of this is, they do not estimate the sacrifice in comparison with the *soul*, or it would be made; but in comparison of their own fleshly ease and indulgence. Now, may we not see the solemn responsibility Christ charges on us with respect to self-discipline? "If thine eye—foot—hand—offend thee," get rid of them. We are to regard these useful members as nothing in comparison of the soul. Nor are we to flinch from the suffering which such sacri-

fices will involve. For we must not forget, that although the strength by which alone we can get rid of these hindrances be all Christ's, yet the pain is all ours. We shall feel the wrench of parting with old habits, and ways, and scenes, in which we have found such pleasure, and which, by long custom, have become almost necessary, but which now we see to be hindrances to the soul in its Christian race. Oh, what stern, strong resolution is required to go through all this! but it must be done when Christ calls for it.

People do not sufficiently consider the character of the things which hinder their advancement. They take it for granted there must be hindrances, but they have neither faith enough to believe they can be removed, nor principle enough to set about trying to get rid of them. They forget the power of Christ, and the promise, that "to him that believeth, all things are possible."

Again, persons do not sufficiently suspect

hindrances in themselves. There are many "roots of bitterness" which they never notice, and all because they never search diligently. The love of Christ is but languid in their hearts. Eternal life is not kept steadily before them. Hatred of sin is but a feeble principle; for in proportion as these deepen in intensity, would be their zeal in laying aside all that prevents their growth. Oh, if we are warned against putting a stumbling-block in our weak brother's way (Rom. xiv.); if our Lord has said, that "it were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, than offend (or put an occasion to fall in the way of) one of those little ones which believe in Him" (Matt. xviii. 6); surely we ought to try to remove them out of our own way! our own soul, surely, is as precious as our neighbour's! It cost the same blood to redeem, it was valued at the same price, and ought to be as dear in our eyes. But there are many persons who seem to be

so intent on the safety of others, that they assume their own as a matter of course; and the very anxiety and activity which they manifest for the welfare of others, become a hindrance to their own. Does any one doubt the truth of this, or, at any rate, its liability, in the case of ministers, Scripture-readers, missionaries, and, in short, of all who are much occupied in the spiritual care of others? Spiritual objects, through their number or frequency, may, alas! be pursued in a cold and perfunctory spirit; and then who can doubt that they are hindrances of the most fatal kind?

And again, when they are found, these hindrances must be dealt with summarily. Our Lord expresses it, by “plucking out,” “cutting off,” “casting from thee.” There must be no compunction, no parleying, no hesitation. We must deal with them as Israel was to deal with him who enticed him to idolatry—“Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine

eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death" (Deut. xiii. 8, 9). Observe the stern inflexibility of the principle: however dear, whether brother, son, daughter, wife, or "friend, which is as thine own soul." Thus he was to be dealt with. Observe, too, the responsibility laid on him who was tempted,—“thine hand shall be first upon him.” There was to be no negative waiving of the thing, no waiting till circumstances interfered in our behalf—there was to be nothing of this sort, but positive action on our part *at once*. And remember, this is no human judgment of the way of dealing with a sinful temptation. It is God's direction; and assuredly, therefore, the best and most suitable way.

I am not unaware of the strong faith needed to act thus resolutely. I am not unaware it is hard of attainment—most difficult. But right things are not often easy,

although always best. But this only shews us that the real staple of the Christian race is faith. It is this that makes hard things easy, and all things possible. And it is as much needed to get rid of the hindrances, as to speed the progress. We must not forget that this "laying aside" must be done on principle, with express reference to winning the race. The "laying aside" anything that hinders, from any other motive than that of serving God better, is not the thing meant. A variety of motives prevail with men to give up sinful habits, and we ought to thank God when any sin is abandoned; but we must not confound what is but mere carnal policy, with what ought to be positively spiritual purpose. You will not misunderstand me to mean, that it is not well to do what is right, however defective may be the motive; but as Christianity is a religion of motives, and we are told to "do all to the glory of God," *if we would really serve God we must mean it.* We shall never serve Him accept-

ably without meaning it. No man serves God by accident. There must be design. Many a drunkard has become sober—many a profligate has become moral—and so far as it goes, they should be encouraged; but if they have not meant God's honour in these things, we are not to confound them with Christian acts.

Let me ask you all, as before God, In any bad habits you may have discontinued, has the honour of God been your object? Have you come to this point on this principle—"I will, by God's grace, 'lay aside' whatever hinders me in the Christian race, however dear, pleasant, fashionable it may be?" You will never get on till you come to this. There are many things which you all would readily get rid of, were it not for the trouble and self-denial involved; and which would not be matters of regret to you: but are there no hindrances which are very dear to you still, which are matters of conscious self-indulgence, which you know are hindrances,

but which you cannot part with, and are inclined to defend ?

Oh, it requires strong as well as stern principle to “lay aside” *all*, to put aside every plea which might be urged for retaining what you desire to retain ! Saul could slay the vulgar, coarse Amalekites, but it required the stern integrity of a Samuel to hew down the perfumed, polished Agag. Look, then, this in the face—bravely, like one who feels his soul’s welfare is at stake—that if you would run successfully, you must “lay aside” what enfeebles the soul and damages it before God, and so hinders it in its Christian course ; and you must lay it aside for God’s sake—because He forbids it. I would say, do not confound difficulties with hindrances. Difficulties are often sent directly by the Lord to exercise and try our faith : hindrances, I think, never, although permitted through Satan and our own evil hearts. Difficulties are not necessarily hindrances, because the race is not to be run

with speed, but with "patience;" and so, while difficulties are exercising faith, and drawing out energy of purpose and character, a man may be making great strides in his Christian race, and the difficulty be the very occasion of his progress.

2d, "*Every weight.*" This signifies any impediment, not any one thing, nor things of any one kind—but anything that hinders and is really a weight to the soul. Now, what responsibility comes in here with respect to self-knowledge! I need not attempt to particularise what may be a weight and hindrance in our Christian race. All actual sin is so, of course (Ps. xxxviii. 4); "the cares of this life" (Luke xxi. 34); the world (James iv. 4), and all comprised under that term; "the lust of the eye—of the flesh—the pride of life." These are said, distinctly, to be "not of the Father, but of the world." The elegancies, refinements, luxuries, display, of life; its riches, honours, &c. I quite admit these things are, in many

respects, a question of degree, in which I would not dogmatise; nor do I know that they necessarily involve sin, or are necessarily hindrances to the soul; still they are great temptations to it, and must be watched. And it is in this, I repeat, that a man's responsibility consists: he must examine, and see, and try to understand, the effect of these things upon his spirit; and if they are as a weight upon his soul, hindering his Christian progress, they are to be laid aside. It is *every weight*—not some only, which cost little or nothing to part with, but every weight, however dear and costly may be the sacrifice. It cannot be doubted there is more hindrance in common things, in which a man secretly imbibes the spirit of the world, and is drawn into its customs, and follows its directions, than in uncommon things. Lawful things are often greater hindrances than things that are sinful, because they are less suspected, and because less watched against, or less considered in

their effects. But who can doubt that it is a man's solemn duty to try the effect which certain companions have upon him—certain society—books—recreations—habits—hours, &c.? These may all be hindrances, which lie like a dead weight upon his soul. And if conscientiously believed to be so, they must be laid aside—and cheerfully too! If, in the maintenance of their Christian integrity, the Hebrews could “take joyfully the spoiling of their goods,” much more ought we to part cheerfully with what operates against our successful running.

We see the inexpressible importance of our Lord's very first principle of service, self-denial (Matt. xvi. 24)—“mortifying the deeds of the body,” “the sin which is in your members,” “crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts.” Let us never forget the flesh, as an evil principle, is ever a deadly hindrance to the Christian race. It is a constant weight or clog to progress; and we must allow it no quarter in any particular.

It entrenches itself in different members in different persons—in the eye, the heart, the tongue, &c. Oh! who shall say what an enemy to the Christian race is the tongue—what mischief it produces in our own souls, what sorrow in others? How many throw themselves back in their race, by the love of saying smart, clever, biting things, as injurious to their own spirituality as they are painful to others; or by always saying kind things, so that truth and faithfulness are obscured, and thus their amiability becomes a sin from fear of man; or by saying pleasant, amusing things, so that imagination often supplies the place of facts, and levity of sobriety! “The tongue is a world of iniquity.” But a true believer will use all means to get rid of so deadly an enemy, to himself and Christ, as an unbridled tongue: he knows it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh; and therefore he will be much in prayer to God to set a watch on his heart, and to keep the door of

his lips; to keep him back from presumptuous sins; to deliver him from temptations; to enable him to mourn for sin before God; and to take reproof thankfully (Ps. cxli. 5).

3d, There is still another expression to be noted, "*The sin which doth so easily beset us.*" This is by some understood to mean indwelling sin; and it means, in this sense, that we must be as careful in suppressing our inward, inbred corruptions, as in laying aside our external weights. Nay, it should, if possible, be more our study to subdue it, for it is an enemy in the heart; and more danger arises from a traitor within a citadel, than from enemies without. David was never in so much danger from any or all the nations without, as from those that rose against him in his own kingdom. And we must remember, it is scarcely in the power of any outward enemy to hurt us, unless the inward traitor takes part. This enemy is never at rest. We cannot act, or speak, or think, but it will infest and harass us: at all

times—in all places—in company—when alone—at church—at home—in prayer—in duties of charity—in our calling—when we are waking or sleeping. It is indeed necessary to “keep the heart with all diligence” (Prov. iv. 23).

But “sin which doth so easily beset us,” may mean some particular sin which we are especially prone to ; such as pride, vanity, sloth, evil tempers, captiousness, unforgiveness, inconsiderateness, &c. Here comes in again the solemn subject of personal responsibility and self-knowledge. You are to try to find this out, and watch against it. “What others do,” even good men, must not be your rule ; what may be harmless to them may be ruinous to you. It may not be sin in itself, but only the occasion of sin, and therefore, however pleasant in itself, it must be laid aside. Your Christianity must be positive, not negative (Matt. xii. 30 ; 1 Cor. x. 31), and therefore things not profitable and edifying to the soul are to be laid aside.

We see the Word of God makes heavy and serious demands on believers, but it is all intended for good. It is written, "In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury" (Prov. xiv. 23); and no labour yields such profit as that which is directed to the destruction of sin, the cultivation of holiness, and spiritual progress. And nothing is a greater hindrance to spirituality than vain, unmeaning conversation on solemn spiritual subjects.

It may be said, we cannot "lay aside" indwelling sin. It is true we cannot attain unto perfection in holiness—we cannot so crucify the old man that he stirs no more; but we are to endeavour, by God's grace, to do so: and our submission and obedience to God's will, and our desire so to run that we may obtain, will be seen in our persevering efforts after conformity to Christ.

We see what a solemn life is the Christian's—what a thing it is to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

us!" The corruption of the heart furnishes the believer with work, most difficult, trying painful work: what Christ calls "plucking out the right eye," &c. Constant work, too—as long as life lasts, till the race is run. No time, no place, no occasion, no circumstances are free from hard work; and we must remember, to relax is to give advantage to our watchful adversary. Corruption works in the best duties, at the most solemn seasons. Satan and the world are great enemies to believers, but the heart is a greater enemy still; and the former have power only according to the state of the latter (John xiv. 30). The more we are like Christ, the less power has Satan over us. There is no cessation in this strife. Particular sins die hard, and many a believer has to struggle with the same sins which cost him prayers and tears years ago. This makes the Christian race often weary. It is, no doubt, a discouraging thing to meet the same enemies day after day—to find ourselves failing in the same

things—to feel we are not more above certain temptations than we were years ago—to find ourselves falling into the same sins, and often not by surprise, but with our eyes open. But what is the remedy? To faint and give up? Nay, to live more by faith, to take hold on Christ's strength, to lean more on Him. to cultivate the persuasion that without Him all is vain—that without His Spirit you cannot “lay aside” common things rightly, but that with Him all things are certain, and you shall win the race.

In conclusion, I would say—

1st, *Pray for more faith*—that you may “endure hardness,” and know what real habitual self-denial is, in all its comprehensive-ness. Pray to be kept from evil. Say with the Psalmist, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” And again, “Order my steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” Never was there greater

need for this prayer than now, when the very foundations of Christianity, the Holy Scriptures, are assailed—in their inspiration, their doctrines, and their integrity. Oh! pray to be like Christ, in obedience to, and reverence for the Sacred Scriptures. He never cast doubts on Scripture, but said, “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

Labour, then, for faith in Christ. Faith opens the reality, and value, and glory of eternal things to the soul; and you will find that it is the love of Christ which will enable you to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you.”

2d, Strive to live in communion with God. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;” for “the fear of the Lord is to hate evil,” and “by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.” Bear in mind, “Thou God seest me,” and thus shall you be enabled to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you.”

3d, *Regard all allowed hindrances in your particular case as sin.* Nothing hinders the soul but sin. Difficulties do not, but sin does. The particular thing, remember, may not be sin in others or to others, but if you believe it hinders you, then to you it is sin, and you must lay it aside. O brethren! ought we to need exhortation to lay aside sin, ruin, destruction? Alas! for the deceitfulness of sin, for the wickedness of our hearts. Oh! watch and pray. Sin may lurk in things little suspected by yourself or others—in habits which render you most pleasant and agreeable to others; yea, in things which are right in themselves, but in which the motive is not pure. Let your prayer be, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24). Go through your history on your knees before the Lord. Take yourself in review for one day. Consider what

have been your thoughts, words, ways—the mode in which you have passed your time, the tone and tendency of your feelings, affections, desires, &c. Unravel yourself before Him. Take yourself to pieces. Go into detail about your conversation, spirit, habits, &c., and beg Him not only to enlighten you to see what is wrong, but also to give you grace resolutely to lay it aside. Set the Lord always before you, approve yourself to Him, act in His strength, cultivate His mind about all things as set forth in His Word, endeavour to maintain “a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man;” and thus shall you be strengthened, first to see and understand, and next to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you.”

THE RACE, AND THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE RUN.

LORD ! can a helpless worm like me
Attempt to make her way to Thee ?
Yes, let me raise Thy praises high ;
In weakness Thou canst strength supply ?

'Twas by Thy grace that I begun,
Resolved the heavenly race to run :
'Tis grace corrects me when I stray,
'Tis grace upholds me in the way.

Run on, my soul, and still adore,
Receiving still, still asking more ;
In Christ thy strength and wisdom lies—
Oh, look to Him with steadfast eyes !

Look to that blood thy Saviour shed ;
Thy Daysman dying in thy stead ;
Behold Him on the accursed tree ;
Great was the love He bore to thee.

He who thus loved thee unto death
Will love thee to thy latest breath ;
Keep sight of Him, my soul, and run—
He'll crown thee when thy race is done.



LECTURE IV.

THE RACE, AND THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT IS
TO BE RUN.

HEBREWS xii. 1.

*“And let us run with patience the race that is set
before us.”*

WE come now to consider the race itself, and the spirit in which it is to be run. I have already said it was a race which required all our powers, for it is for our lives, our souls. It is not only a certain course to be run under certain conditions, but it is a contest against all the powers of evil, both within and without. It is a “striving for the mastery” over all the powers of darkness, and in spite of all hindrances. It is a wrest-

ling “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,” so that we must “take the whole armour of God.” We shall be sure to be placed in such circumstances as to need it; and happy if we know how to use it, and adapt it to our circumstances. In the last lecture, we spoke of what would hinder our running; in this, we are to consider the race itself, the gathering up all our powers and concentrating them on this point—namely, so running as to win. I will ask your attention to two main points—

I. THE RACE.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE RUN.

I. THE RACE.

It is “a race set before us.” It is not what we fall into by chance, nor is it of our own choosing; but it is “set before us,” marked out by the Lord himself. It is a prescribed course. Christ has determined it, as well as

limited the bounds of it. He has ordered it, with all the duties, responsibilities, service, &c., which belong to it. It is to be run, too, according to prescribed rules, which are all plainly set down in the Word of God. With respect to the difficulties of it, Christ hides nothing from us. He tells us, before we begin, to “sit down and count the cost”—that if we would follow Him we must begin by denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, &c.—so that entering upon it may be as truly an act of our choice, and will, and judgment, as it was on the part of Moses, when he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. xi. 24, 25). So that if, in the trials of the race, we are inclined to faint and grow weary, we may say to ourselves, “Why do I faint? Has Christ deceived me? Did He not forewarn me? Did He not tell me of trial?” If, therefore, we find His words come true,

let it be our encouragement rather to persevere to the end; for He who has prescribed the course, and knows all the difficulties and trials which beset it, will carry us triumphantly through it. It was on this ground Paul said, We run "not uncertainly" (1 Cor. ix. 26), for his "course was set before him."

The first practical point to which we are to bend our minds is this:—My Christian race is to be run where God has placed me. Let me, then, consider my condition and my circumstances. Am I a parent, a child, old, young, rich, poor, in business, at leisure, &c.? I am to adapt myself and my circumstances to my race—not my race to my circumstances—and to run it, with all the advantages and disadvantages arising from them. God has determined my circumstances, position, &c., and I am to do the best I can in them, believing them to be the best for me. If we kept this ever in mind, how would it settle us in our place and work, and put an end to vain wishes! how would it make us redeem

the time now wasted in wishing things different from what they are, and turn our attention to making the best of things as they are—to running the race set before us! Am I in business? Then business shall be accommodated—yea, made subservient—not merely to running, but winning the race. Have I heavy claims and responsibilities of any other kind? Then they shall bend to the paramount importance of this race.

In no case shall we be warranted in neglect of business or any other duties. Nor will God, in any case, ever lay upon us such responsibilities in temporal things, as that we need neglect anything which He has charged upon us with respect to spiritual things. It is quite possible, and, alas! common, for a man so to accumulate business cares upon himself, as that his soul is neglected and his Christian race hindered. He may also accustom himself to say, “I am so immersed in business and its incessant demands, that I cannot do this and that;” but I would ear-

nestly warn such to remember, that they should rather say, "I have so immersed myself in business—I have so accumulated cares upon myself in ten thousand ways—that I am a sinner against my own soul." Yes; his is the guilt! All this business, which hinders his running, is not necessary in the sense that serving God is. Oh, let him beware of charging these hindrances upon God, as if he must attend to temporal things at the expense of spiritual! Listen to James (i. 13–15), "Let no man say when he is tempted (tempted to postpone spiritual things to temporal), I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (the lust of, business or any other thing) and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin (the sin of self-excuse and charging its circumstances on God): and sin, when it is finished (when the sin of self-excuse has settled into a confirmed habit),

bringeth forth death." No ; the thing is, to adapt our time and strength to our work, and to give to each a due portion ; and to remember that the work of running and winning the Christian race is as real as any temporal work God has given us to do ; and who will say it is not as important ? Here, then, comes in again our responsibility, our need of praying for a right judgment in all things, that we may know what is important, and estimate everything rightly, according to the mind of Christ and the standard of Holy Scripture. I am not unaware of the difficulty of all this ; but it is not a difficulty insurmountable—not a difficulty beyond the reach of faith rightly to deal with ; and, I may say, it is a difficulty which will cease to be one just in proportion to our rightly estimating the importance of winning the race. If we make winning the race the first consideration, as we ought, we shall make other things give way without much trouble—we shall neither love them nor regret

their loss, in comparison of the great object; but if we allow business, or any other cares, to take the first place, then the difficulty will be great indeed; and it will be a difficulty which will daily increase in magnitude, just as the winning the race diminishes in importance.

Thus it is, that, instead of "laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them," persons go on "lading themselves with thick clay" (Hab. ii. 6); whether it is in being "careful and troubled" about a variety of things, or whether it is in having the mind absorbed by that most engrossing of all temptations, money; so that money, money, getting money, becomes the thing not that they live by merely, but, alas! live for. . It would almost seem, in the present day, as if to have a large business, and to increase it day by day, were "the one thing needful." The spirit pervades all classes; and persons, Christian persons, who are by no means indifferent to winning the

race, seldom stop to inquire the effect of such habits on their Christian course. The worldly phrase, "Oh, they are doing well," seems to satisfy every thought; and whether the "doing well" extends to the soul, is, alas! not often a matter of concern. But ought it not to be? Should we think him a wise man who, in running a race, encumbered himself with all kinds of weights and hindrances? Should we think he was "doing well," who was every minute in danger of going further behind? Should we say, "Look how well he is doing! he has just taken up a fresh weight; he has got more upon him than ever?" Should we not rather exclaim, "Lay aside every weight, or you will lose the race altogether?" In weighing "things seen" against "things not seen," we must ever make the spiritual scale the weightiest. These things are incapable of an even balance. Hear the Judge, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what can a man give in ex-

change for his soul?" "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

I do not say that a mind full of business, or a pocket full of money, is of necessity to be accompanied by a lean and starving soul; but we may be assured of this, that our Lord has not said all He has, about "riches and the cares of this life," without deep significance; and that the possession of riches, and, perhaps, still more, the accumulation of them, is a great snare and difficulty to the soul in running the race set before us!

The race, then, is to be run, as God has set it before us—under the circumstances and in the position in which He has placed us—and it is our responsibility to distinguish between the difficulties, which He puts in our way to exercise and try our faith, and the hindrances which we culpably accumulate upon ourselves, by preferring "things seen" to "things not seen," and a corruptible to an incorruptible crown.

Let us now consider—

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE ARE TO RUN.

“With patience.” The grace of patience is much commended in Scripture. The seed on the good ground are they which “bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke viii. 15). Paul prays for the Colossians, that they may be “strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness” (Col. i. 11); and he glories in the Thessalonians for this grace (2 Thess. i. 4).

The idea of a race forbids all loitering or sloth, in any way; therefore we must not confound patience with anything like indifference, or a spirit which does not much care how things go. There is no indifference in Christianity; nothing like “don’t care” in the Christian race. No; but patience is that calm, meek, submissive spirit under trial, coupled with a bright expectation of deliverance, which at once feels that God’s ways are right, though often veiled in a deep mysteriousness, and that He is faithful to

His promise in His own good time, in spite of all that seems to be against it. This is the spirit in which we are to run—a spirit which combines submission and hope, endurance and expectation. We are to run, then, “with patience;” not necessarily with speed, but “with patience;” plodding on and on, in the same round of duties—the same narrow sphere—exciting no notice—calling forth no commendation from men—having neither gifts, nor powers, nor opportunity to make a noise in the world—doing only common things—living amidst common people. These things will be often disagreeable and wearing to the flesh; nay, to some people they will be altogether intolerable. “There is, perhaps, in every heart a tendency *to live before men*; but, in some persons, life without publicity is scarcely worth having.

I speak now of what are called “religious people.” Their life seems to be always “before men.” No opportunity of going hither and thither is passed over. It always seems

so urgent a call, that they feel "obliged to go." To be at home, silently and diligently working, where God has put them, is irksome. The excitement of change has become almost necessary. Of course, there may be persons who may do this profitably to others, and without damage to themselves—men on whom God has bestowed popular gifts by which they can interest others in good things—but such persons should walk cautiously and prayerfully, lest they mistake the excitement of popularity for the power and warmth of Christian principle; and lest, while they have a name to live, they are dead before God. It is a far higher and rarer attainment to be content *to live before God*; and it is very blessed; for you shall find that the common duties of our proper calling, however monotonous and uninteresting in themselves, will become instinct with life and power to the spirit, when we look upon them with the eye of faith, as constituting the race set before us—when we regard them as God's appoint-

ments—as His appointments for His own glory and our salvation: then common things become noble things, done in an uncommon spirit; and the daily and homely drudgeries of life, when undertaken in the spirit of faith, and for the service of the Lord, become “spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. ii. 5).

This is the way to run. This is the sure way of progress—“Growing up in all things into him which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. iv. 15)—aiming at conformity to Christ.

Again, in spiritual things, how often is that maxim seen to be true, “Most haste, worst speed.” How often is it exemplified in the Christian race! You see some Christians all activity and bustle; always engaged in some busy works; hurrying hither and thither; running, literally; always doing, but, alas! seldom thinking. No time for calm reflection, serious meditation, fervent prayer, deep study of Scripture. Seldom stopping

to inquire why they do this and that, what they mean by it, what good they do to others, what good they get themselves. There is much surface-work but little depth, little dealing with the heart, little resolution to do what they do in the best way, and to God's glory. What a text is that, "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa.xxviii.16); *i. e.*, shall live seriously, reflectively; doing well rather than much; not discouraged by difficulties nor stopped by hindrances; but calmly and patiently meeting things, as they arise, in the strength of God; enduring, suffering, but still hoping and believing that our "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58). In running our race we shall have "need of patience," in the face of all the opposition that will be made by men and Satan. How much David needed patience when, in his troubles, men said daily unto him, "Where is thy God?" (Ps. xlii. 10.) And we see how the patience of hope sustained him. We, too, are told to "consider

Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds." You remember how our Lord was treated, how they reviled Him, saying, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 43). And what befell our Lord on the cross shews what His followers may expect under it, for "the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord;" and our resource is the same as His, namely, "committing ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 23).

Every effort will be made, by the malice of Satan, to "wear out the saints of the Most High;" and what havoc he has made, and is daily making among professors, is seen in the numbers of apostates from the faith, who give up and turn aside before the race is run. But in this especially is the value of patience: "By patient continuance in well-doing men obtain eternal life." By patience the soul is

supported and strengthened. Our Lord's direction to His disciples, in the midst of the hatred and persecution to which they would be exposed, is, "In your patience possess ye your souls." For it enables the believer to take a calm view of things as they are—to see how the facts of the Christian race daily agree with what our Lord had said; and thus, seeing the truth of God's Word, in the trials of life, the soul will be encouraged to rest on the promises, and to say with Paul, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). And to obviate any despondency which might arise from meeting the same enemies day after day, contending with the same sins, St James says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." And we have also the testimony of "the cloud of witnesses." You will be called to nothing which was not found

in them—to nothing which is not necessary for the trial of your faith, “if need be”—to nothing which is not practicable to faith. I shewed you (Lecture II.) what difficulties faith will carry a man through; and no more will ever be required of you than men of like passions have successfully accomplished.

Let their examples stir us up to holy zeal in the same path of patience, considering the end—the prize set before us. Be ours the spirit of Paul, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

In this exhortation, I of course assume that you possess the principle of real faith in Christ—the Son of God; otherwise such examples will only cast you down, and render effort hopeless. As says Paul, “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I

spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. iv. 13). If we have not the same spirit of faith, it is vain to attempt to imitate them; but to faith, all things are possible.

Once more; the race is to be run "with patience"—therefore in sickness as well as in health. Look at that suffering saint of God, lying for years upon a sick-bed; ripe, as we think, long since for glory—ready to receive the prize. But no! there is "need of patience:" there may be a long way, and a long while, still to run. Look at one cut off from all the outward enjoyments of life, enduring from day to day severe bodily pain, and, in some cases, without many of the alleviations of sickness; contending with a Will which often rises, and asks, "Why am I thus? why am I laid prostrate, while others are allowed to be actively and usefully employed?" but which Will, by degrees, God graciously hushes into uncomplaining stillness and peace, and into the sweet assurance that the whole discipline is sent in love. What a comfort,

under such circumstances, to know that our particular course in the Christian race is "set before us"—is of the appointment of a loving Father! What a comfort to feel that, in cutting such an one off from contact with the world, God is thus shielding from far severer trials than are endured on a bed of pain. Might we not say to such an one, "Be of good cheer—are you not running the race set before you? are you not bearing witness, as truly as others, to the reality of faith? to the reality of God's grace in subduing the will, and moulding the heart into conformity to Christ? to the power of prayer in stilling complaint? to the reality of spiritual comfort and joy in the midst of great bodily suffering? to the blessed truth that though your outward man decayeth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day? To outward eyes your course may be rough and hard, but to your own soul God is daily shewing it is the best for you. He is moulding you day by day to say, "Not my will,

but thine, O Lord, be done." You are, then, not only running, but, in the exercise of patience and faith, you are surely winning the race set before you. You are not to consider how you could have run some different course, but how best you can fulfil your own!

This is the privilege of faith and patience in suffering; not the privilege of mere suffering, but of suffering according to God's will. Faith makes all the difference—the everlasting difference; faith, which brings the future to bear upon the present. So that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

Observe the lessons which flow from this subject:—

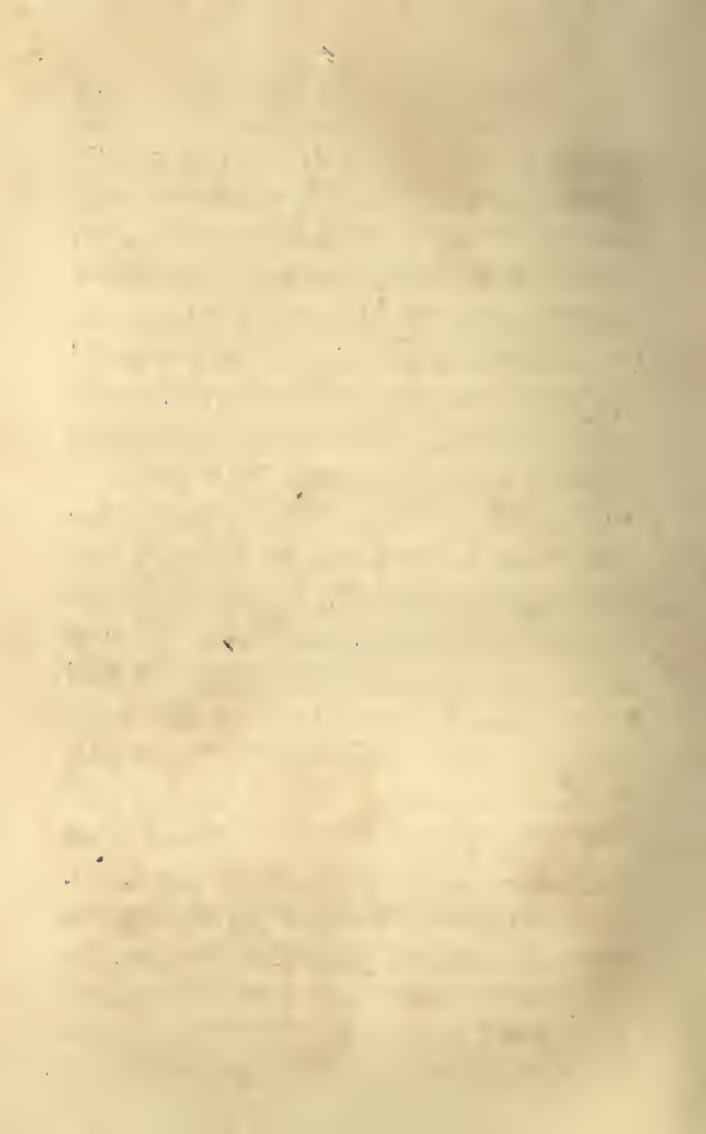
1. *Be cheerful and contented and diligent in running the race set before you.* Despise it not because it is obscure and far from the

observation of men. It is safer to run in the shade, if God so appoint, than in the dazzling glare of a deceiving world. He knows where you can run best, and He has set it before you. Despise not your daily duties because they are common and homely—because the range of them is narrow and unknown; but remember that all God's appointed courses end in the same everlasting goal, and that faith can turn the simplest service of ministering a drop of water into a spiritual sacrifice, and can so expand the range of daily duty, as that it shall reach from earth to heaven; and thus, in serving man below, you shall be ministering in the courts of God.

2. *Faint not at the difficulties of the way, nor be staggered by the hindrances.* Remember, "There shall no temptation take you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that

ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Wait on the Lord, and He will renew your strength. "Let patience have her perfect work." Persevere to the end. Remember Christ's words, "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." Oh! if you would win, the last step, which carries you over the very threshold of heaven, is as necessary as that with which you started in the race.

3. *Hang on the faithfulness of God!* Are you running in the course He has set before you? In His spirit?—in His strength?—to His glory? Then be of good cheer. He who has led you thus far, will continue to lead you to the end. "God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew." He has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 28). Look up then and trust: put your hand in His, and "run with patience the race set before you."



THE ATTITUDE OF THE RACER.

“WE would see Jesus”—for the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life :
We would see Jesus, our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness—the final strife.

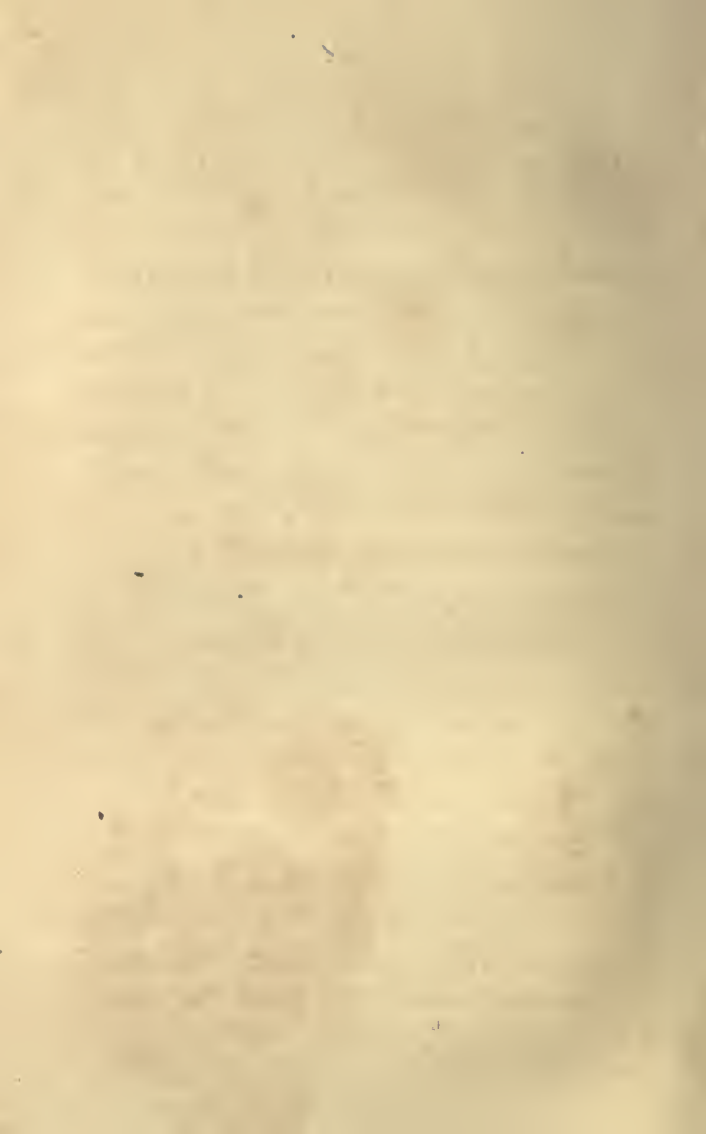
We would see Jesus—for life’s hand hath rested
With its dark touch upon both heart and brow ;
And though our souls have many a billow breasted,
Others are rising in the distance now.

We would see Jesus—the great Rock-foundation,
Whereon our feet were set by sovereign grace :
Nor life nor death, with all their agitation,
Can thence remove us if we see His face.

We would see Jesus—other lights are paling
Which for long years we have rejoiced to see ;
The blessings of our pilgrimage are failing—
We would not mourn them, for we go to Thee !

We would see Jesus—yet the spirit lingers
Round the dear objects it has loved so long,
And earth from earth can scarce unclothe its fingers—
Our love to Thee makes not this love less strong.

We would see Jesus—this is all we’re needing—
Strength, joy, and willingness come with the sight ;
We would see Jesus—dying, risen, pleading :—
Then welcome, day ! and farewell, mortal night !



LECTURE V.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE RACER.

HEBREWS xii. 2.

*“ Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of
our faith.”*

IN these words we have the attitude of the soul in running the Christian race—“ Looking unto Jesus.” In the previous lectures we have considered the principle of faith—its actings—and the examples which Scripture furnishes of what it can do and suffer. Now we have to contemplate the glorious object of faith. We have to ascend, in thought, from the examples of Divine power, to Him who is the source of all power; and who furnished, in Himself, a pattern of faith

and obedience in every way. From our companions in faith, we are led to "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" and therefore Paul proposes to us the Person of the Son of God, as Him from whom alone comes the power to run our Christian race, and grace and wisdom to run it successfully.

"The Author and Finisher of faith:" the word "our" not being in the original. The true idea here is, not that Jesus is "the Author and Finisher of our faith," in the sense of being the cause of it, and the sustainer and completer of it (though that is true); but that He is the perfect model of faith, the best example we can have: that, if in the life of faith we are in difficulty, we must look to Him, and we shall find every doubt solved, and our line of action clearly laid down: for, in looking to Him, we see One who has carried off every palm of victory, and has always been triumphant. The context will shew that a continued act is intended: "Run with patience the race set before us, looking

unto Jesus;" looking all the while we run, and looking that we may run happily and safely!

The term "looking," in Scripture, when it refers to God or Christ, denotes an act of faith or trust. It is not a mere glance now and then, but the habit of the soul. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God" (Ps. cxxiii. 2). Feeling that "all our fresh springs are in Him" (Ps. lxxxvii. 7), we must be like the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, constantly "expecting to receive something of Him" (Acts iii. 5).

We have two points to consider—

I. THE ACT OF FAITH.

II. THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

I. THE ACT OF FAITH.

This is expressed by the term "looking unto." The word used in the original is peculiar.

It means looking away from other things, in order to look unto Jesus—having the attention resolutely withdrawn from all distractions, that it may be steadily fixed on Jesus. There must be a set purpose in it. Persons may look away from the world (as ordinarily understood), and separate themselves outwardly from it, but still not in order to look to Christ. They may carry into retirement a world in their own hearts, not less fatal to their salvation than that which they leave behind; for it is not being separate from the world in body which is necessary, but in heart and spirit.

Now, I need scarcely tell you, this looking away from other things, in order to look to Christ, is the main difficulty of the Christian life. To be in the world, and not of it—to have to do with many lawful and beautiful and attractive things, and suffer none of them to steal the heart from Christ—to “buy, as though we possessed not, and to use this world, as not abusing it” (1 Cor. vii. 30, 31)

—to make all subservient to winning the race, and to count anything misused and misapplied which does not minister to our spiritual success: this is the difficulty. But is it not the important thing? Is it not the wise thing? Is it not the act of common sense? Is it not what wise men do in temporal things? Do not they bend all things to their point? Do they ever, to use their own language, “throw away a chance?” No! never. Believers all know this, and approve it; but still, such is “the deceitfulness of sin,” that they find the same intentness in spiritual things a great difficulty. Nor is the difficulty lessened by the knowledge of what we ought to do. We all well know we ought to give our heart’s best affections to Christ. We all know, for we have experienced it a thousand times, that all this world’s pleasures, and profits, and allurements, are vain and transitory things. We know that a spirit above worldly cares and trifles is the best possession we can have: and yet, with

all this knowledge, how difficult is it to attain this state—yea, how difficult even to try! To secure this, we need a clear perception of the excellency and glory of Christ, the object of faith: for the more we see in Him, the less shall we see in other things; and the more our hearts are occupied with Him, the less power will other things have to win us away. We need, moreover, a spirit of simple dependence on His power and love for the supply of all our wants. And when once a man knows what an eternal God is—an eternal Christ is—an eternal crown is—it takes the edge off other things. Yes! as it is said, “From the face of Him who sat on the great white throne the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them;” so of the allurements of this world—when once seen in the light of the glory of Christ, they fade and lose their power over the soul. Just as when the glorious sun bursts forth from the chambers of the east, he blots out the stars—not by extin-

guishing, but by outshining them, so that their light is no longer seen. Such is the power of the light of God's countenance lifted up upon us. This we must remember, that in order to look to Christ, we must look off the world and the things of it; for a worldly spirit will obscure the glory of Christ by corrupting the tastes of the soul: if the world has your heart, you will never look to Christ—and then you will wander from the way, you will go wrong altogether. Nor need I warn you against sin in general: you know that the conscious love and practice of any sin will deaden the soul to the pursuit of spiritual things; and you will drop down exhausted in the spiritual race, overcome by the devil. There is no running this race without spiritual strength, and the great source of spiritual strength is a throne of grace: but observe the effect of the love and pursuit of sin on prayer—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer."

But there are certain things on which the heart is apt to dwell, to the hindrance of the spiritual race, which, though not necessarily sins in themselves, we must yet look off from, in order to look to Christ:—

1st, *Your own weakness.* There is a habit of mind which is constantly leading men to say, “Oh, if I could but do this and that—if I were but this or that, how much better I should get on!” One does not deny the effect of circumstances in the spiritual life, but what we have to do is to run our race through them, “looking unto Jesus.” We must try—the promises are made to *effort*, not to mere *want*: observe Isa. xli. 17—it is “when the poor and needy *seek* water,” &c., not merely *want* it. But what the persons I speak of are thinking of, is the desirableness of having more strength in themselves wherewith to meet their hindrances, instead of seeking it in Christ. They are continually dwelling on themselves—looking *down*, instead of looking *up* to Him in whom alone

they can be strong. It is quite true, that there is a sense in which the very consciousness of weakness is strength ; as when Paul says, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10); but then the secret in Paul's case was, that he threw himself on Christ : as he says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that (under these circumstances of infirmity) the power of Christ may rest upon me" (ver. 9). So he says, "I can do all things (in spite of circumstances) through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). He took the course himself which he proposed to the Ephesians—to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10); and to Timothy—to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 1).

Again, you must look off—

2d, From the length and dangers of the race. How may the Christian see his heart reflected in the history of Israel ! We read, "The soul of the people was much dis-

couraged because of the way" (Num. xxi. 4). They had a long weary way before them, and they were cast down. How many faint at the length of the way before them! How many say to themselves, "'Oh that I had wings like a dove,' to run my race swiftly instead of patiently!" But to such I would say—"Look off from the length of the way, to Him who called you to start in the race. He is 'the Author' of the faith by which alone you started, and He will be 'the Finisher' of it too. Instead of the length of the way, think of the crown that awaits you at the end. And as the seven years, which Jacob served for Rachel, seemed unto him but a few days for the love which he had unto her (Gen. xxix. 20), so will it be with you. Look to Christ. His presence and love will light up the weariest way; and the length will be as nothing; and you will trip lightly, instead of drag wearily, over the sands of life's desert."

So with the dangers of the way! These

are all to be met by the power of God; and just in proportion as we keep our eyes on Christ, and turned away from them, will they vanish. What an illustration have we of this truth in the case of Peter walking on the water! (Matt. xiv. 28, &c.)—so long as he kept his eye on Christ, he could walk on the top of the waves, but when he looked off Christ, and saw the winds boisterous, he was afraid and began to sink. Yea, more; those waves, on the very top of which Peter could walk when “looking unto Jesus,” opened their jaws to swallow him up the moment he took his eye off Christ and looked at them instead.

But there is one other point I would mention: we must look off—

3d, *From difficulties that oppose our running.* Oh! it makes all the difference whether you look at them or at Christ. Where lay the cause of the difference in the estimate of the difficulties of entering the promised land between Joshua and Caleb, and the ten other spies? The latter looked

at the difficulties only, and they were overwhelmed: the others, at God, and they were confident. The ten said, "The people be strong, and the cities are walled and very great; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (Num. xiii. 28, 33). Whereas Joshua and Caleb leaned on the promise and power of God, and said, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Num. xiv. 9). Dear brethren, if you can really look off the difficulties of your course to Christ, then here is your consolation; it is not a question between you and what opposes you, but between what opposes you and Christ! You are quit of it: and whatever the difficulty be, it is your privilege to say, "By the help of my God, I can leap over the wall."

Yes! you are to keep your eyes and heart steadily on Christ, as the source of all power in the race; and if you have the right spirit

in this matter, it is your privilege to say, "It is not I, but Christ"—"Not I, but the grace of God." This is the truth. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13). "Looking unto Jesus"—"setting the Lord alway before you," as Christ did—will give you power and endurance, will enable you to hold on in the face of all trials. Thousands may pass you on the road, but you are not necessarily losing for all that. Their road may be smoother now, and yours may be rougher. You may have your difficulties now; theirs may lie further on, and may come by and by. Besides, their power may be altogether less—their faith more feeble. They may not be able to bear so much as you can. You may be learning lessons now to fit you for what lies before you. But here is your comfort,—all that Christ teaches is profitable, and worth knowing, and is sure to work for the soul's good.

Again, if you would have your course

bright and peaceful, you must look to Christ. Oh, if we can really do this, we shall find Christianity is not all trial! Clouds may prevail, but there are gleams of sunshine. There are happy times, when beams of heavenly light stream into the soul—when the Holy Spirit whispers peace to the heart—when pardon of sin is felt to be a reality, and fellowship with Christ a fact—when heaven is believed to be our eternal home, and a throne of grace is felt to be our rest and refuge here—when the heart smiles in the happy consciousness that this poor life is not all, that the race will one day be run and won, and the crown obtained and worn for ever!

But, I ask, when is this blessedness attained? when is this felt and realised as our portion? Just when the heart, turned from all other things, is looking steadily to Christ! Just when the blood that bought us, and the righteousness in which we are accepted, are most confidently believed in—just when the

love of Christ in dying and rising again, and ascending into heaven, and ordering all the minute particulars of our race, is most vividly seen by faith! Then "afflictions seem light, and but for a moment"—then the course seems clear and easy—the difficulties vanish—the way seems bright—the effort nothing. We seem in spirit to have reached the goal, because we are looking really to "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

II. THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

Jesus! What does this name comprehend, or rather what does it not? All that man needs for time and eternity! It is to the believer's heart like "ointment poured forth" (Cant. i. 3); it has in it "all powders of the merchant" (Cant. iii. 6)—all graces and excellencies! One creature has this excellence, and another that; but Christ has all. Does a man need a Priest to atone for his sins? here is Jesus, who by His own blood hath made reconciliation for him! A Prophet to

teach him? here is Jesus, who has "the tongue of the learned, that He may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary!" (Isa. l. 4.) A King to defend him? here is Jesus, to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth!" Is there an orphan child who needs a Father? Christ is our everlasting Father! Is there a widow who has lost her Husband? come here, poor mourner, "Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is His name!" (Isa. liv. 5.) Do we want a Brother? here is one "born for adversity!" A Friend? here is one "that loveth at all times!" (Prov. xvii. 17.) Yea, and the best of all in every capacity.

He is indeed Almighty to us in every respect. It is He who marked out our course, and who knows, therefore, all the difficulties and hindrances of it, and is as able as He is willing to help us in it. Whatever our course—however lowly and obscure—we are not running with no eye to watch us, no arm to defend us, no ear to hear our cry. No! There

is an eye, that never slumbereth, ever open upon us—an arm, that is never shortened, able and willing to save—an ear, that is never heavy, ready to hear! And these have ever been at your service—ever exerted on your behalf, hitherto. Again, is your course in the crowded highway of public life, where you are surrounded by thousands, where there are many syren voices crying, “Turn in hither?” you need not fear being lost in the crowd. His eye sees you, and He knows His sheep from all others; and He who stopped to listen to the request of Bartimæus, and to dry the tears of the widow of Nain, will not fail to hear your cry!

And we shall have constant need of this help. A thousand perplexities will at times beset us, but our help is in the name of the Lord. We must look to Him. Yes! we must look up; for in heaven is the wisdom to solve the difficulties of earth, and thence must we obtain it. We must look up; from heaven comes the key to unlock the deep.

recesses of the Word of God, and thence must we obtain the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We must look up; for just in proportion as we keep our eye on Jesus—keep our heart up in heaven—drink into the spirit of our Elder Brother—meditate on the submission of His will, the alacrity of His obedience, the principle of His life when on earth—shall we run with patience and with safety.

Yes! we must take the place of privilege which Scripture assigns to all believers—“Seated with Christ in heavenly places” (Eph. ii. 6). There we must dwell. We must take our place close by our living Head, and we must, so to speak, come forth daily from heaven to run our race on earth—bringing heavenly principles to bear on daily life; and thither must we return again in spirit after the turmoil and bustle of the contest. Our breathing times are times of “looking unto Jesus.” Our times of refreshing must be from the presence of the Lord; and every pause, in the heat of the conflict, will be best

spent in communion with Him, and in such recreations only as He approves.

This is the secret of running the race, and winning it too. This will in nowise prevent the exercise of any faculties God has given us, nor our responsibility for their right use; but "looking unto Jesus" will sanctify them all. This will in nowise countenance any relaxation or indolence in the positive business and duties of life, whether parental, filial, social, or political; but will give power, and point, and purpose to them all. They will all be directed to the highest object, the service of God. "Looking unto Jesus" is the way to bring a right judgment to bear on all things, for we shall see them in the light, and weigh them in the balance, of eternity! "Looking unto Jesus" is the way to secure "a spirit of love and power and of a sound mind," for we shall learn the mind of our Master in all things. "Looking unto Jesus" is the way to be wise and prudent in all things, for it will be but drawing our sup-

plies from that “riches of grace wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence” (Eph. i. 7, 8). “Looking unto Jesus” will cheer us in our daily course, remembering that He ran it steadily, patiently, triumphantly.

And think not that being thus wholly occupied with “looking unto Jesus” will make us cold and hard and unmindful of the kindnesses and sympathies of life—nay, nay! “Looking unto Jesus,” we shall catch the spirit of our blessed Master, whose heart was full of love; ever running over on all with whom He had to do. Running with diligence, and yet with patience, as He did, we shall find time for all the charities of life. We shall have a word of kindness, and a look of friendliness, for all. We shall be willing to see the favourable side of all—to see the best in everybody, and to make the most we can of it with integrity. Not, indeed, to the qualifying of the mournful fact of sin; or to the diluting of the distinctiveness of God’s

truth; or to the obscuring of man's deep need of the Redeemer's blood; but striving to win men to Christ, more by an exhibition of the peace and holiness which He alone can give, than by a seeming exclusive appropriation of His love.

Thus we shall never be too busy to help to bear our neighbour's burden, and thus fulfil our Master's law. And we shall be ever ready to listen to the tale of sorrow, and to stretch forth a helping hand to all who, like ourselves, are struggling through a weary strife. And how many are the occasions and opportunities in which we might brush aside some hindrance from our brother's path—in which we might make it smoother to the weary and heavy laden, if only we lived more in the spirit of Him to whom we profess to be looking!

Oh, let us strive to be Christians indeed—Christ-like in everything! Then shall we be full of love to all! Then will kind and cheering words flow, as it were, naturally

from our lips—then will useful and holy acts flow forth in our daily conduct—then will tenderness, delicacy, tact, and feeling mark all our intercourse one with another: and then all these things will be of the rarest and the best, for they will be done for the glory of God. And do you ask, “How can I attain this?” I answer, “By ‘looking unto Jesus:’” for then, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image” (2 Cor. iii. 18).

What are the lessons ?

1st, *Cultivate a single eye to Christ!* Observe the striking contrast in the passage, “The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Matt. vi. 22). There is no success in the Christian race, unless we are looking singly to Jesus. An easy, careless, latitudinarian spirit will destroy all. It is not a

race to be run at odd times, when the fit takes us, nor when we may think we have “a convenient season ;” but it is to be the absorbing object of life. It must pervade all life. We are not at liberty to halt at times, and step aside into the world, and then to take up our course again as if nothing particular had happened. You will find one day, that, in such departures, something does happen to the soul. And though you may not perceive it now, and be unwilling to believe it, yet that does not prove that mischief has not happened, but rather that it has, and that “the light that is in thee is darkness.”

2d, Depend on Christ wholly! Remember, every needful qualification for successful running is in Him; and to be had only from Him. In any departures from the prescribed course, confess your sin instantly to Him; but place no reliance on your confessions, and prayers, and tears for obtaining peace; let nothing content you but coming afresh to “the blood that cleanseth from all sin.” Let

the language of your soul be, in progress as well as in occasional backslidings, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him" (Ps. lxii. 5).

3d, Remember there is nothing else worth looking to! What is earth and all its allurements? The day comes when it shall reel to and fro like a drunkard: when every mountain and island shall be moved out of its place; and "the earth, and all the works of it, shall be burned up." What is worldly honour? It has been well compared to a feather floating in the air, over a man's head, which he is striving to catch, but which thousands of men are trying to prevent his catching. It is a great question if he catch it at all; but suppose he should—what has he got? A feather! Such is worldly honour!

What is human friendship? You have one now who is as your own soul! Are you sure of him? You are soon invited to follow him to his grave, or what is worse far, he grows cold and strange, and you feel there

is nothing human that can endure the strain of earth. What must we do, then, to make sure of anything now and for ever? We must look to Christ: not only to sanctify the enjoyment of what we have, but to keep it pure, and thus make it ours for ever, by making it His own!

Let us, then, look to Jesus. Commit all that is dear—husband, wife, child, &c.—to Him: and we shall find Him to be not only the gracious Author, but the no less gracious and triumphant Finisher of our faith.



THE PROSPECT BEFORE HIM.

THE joyful day is hast'ning,
When, life's short troubles o'er,
My soul shall need no chast'ning,
Shall never suffer more.
Then grief and pain and dying,
Nor felt, nor fear'd, shall be ;
All sorrow then and sighing
Far, far away shall flee !

That God whose work is perfect,
Whose will no change can know,
Reveals this glorious prospect
To cheer my path below.
My Saviour hath awarded
A place in heaven to me ;
By power Almighty guarded
That heritage shall be.

And onward He will bear me,
And guide and guard me still ;
And by His grace prepare me
That glorious seat to fill.
Each painful dispensation
That now makes dark my days,
Shall work for my salvation,
Shall swell my song of praise !



LECTURE VI.

THE PROSPECT BEFORE HIM.

HEBREWS xii. 2.

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

WE have now reached the last subject in our course—the prospect before us in the Christian race. May it animate us! and may the Holy Spirit graciously render it so attractive and abiding in its influence, that we may ever find it helpful and refreshing!

Our example is the Lord Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother. The encouragement from it is this—that if He endured the Cross, and was victorious in His course, mysteriously

heavy and painful as it was, we may also successfully finish our race in the strength of Him who is “the Author and Finisher of our faith.” We have to dwell not only on “the prospect” of the believer, but on the frame of mind which our Lord exhibited during His race.

We see in Him faith, love, zeal for His Father’s glory, submission to His will, compassion for the souls of men. And these graces are all to be exhibited in us. Faith will enable us to start in the race—love, “to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us”—zeal for God’s glory, to run and not faint—submission, to do so “with patience” in the course God “has set before us”—and compassion for others, to set the best example we can of a bright and hopeful spirit. We will consider—

I. WHAT CHRIST DID.

II. WHAT SUSTAINED HIM.

III. WHAT HE HAS ATTAINED.

I. WHAT CHRIST DID.

“Endured the Cross, despising the shame.” There is an aspect of our Lord’s sufferings, in which they furnish us with no example—in which they are altogether unapproachable. The Cross He endured had a mysterious weight about it, sufficient to have sunk the universe, but the God-man bore it. This aspect is that which refers to the atonement which He made for the sins of all who shall be saved. But although the actual cross is mentioned here, as the climax of Christ’s sufferings, surely His whole life on earth is included; for this is particularly the feature of His sufferings in which we are called to “consider” Him. As, for instance, the way in which He “endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself;” the scriptural wisdom, with which He defeated the traps laid to entangle Him in His talk—the long-suffering, with which He bore the hardness and unbelief of men’s hearts—the meekness with which He submitted to the unkindness

heaped upon Him — the uncomplaining silence, with which He listened to their taunts—all these are included in His sufferings, and furnish us with an unparalleled example. The 22d and 69th Psalms are full of prophetic declarations of these points, and the Gospels abound with illustrations of them. He endured them all—endured them patiently. There was a holy composure in His soul that, though so unjustly and cruelly dealt with, no word of reproach or threatening ever escaped Him. “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth” (Isa. liii. 7). And when He did speak, it was in prayer for those who murdered Him (Luke xxiii. 34, and 1 Peter ii. 21, &c.).

Unto this invincible patience and love, He added the greatest magnanimity of spirit. “He despised the shame”—did not faint under it. He regarded it not, in comparison of the “joy set before Him.” This was always in His eye, and He lived in constant contemplation of it. Besides, too, the Cross was no real

shame to our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not His own sins He bore, but those of His beloved people. It brought no stain upon His spotless soul, while it removed mountains of guilt from the believing soul of each one of His dear brethren. There was no reproach in the Cross to Him. It was in accordance with His Father's will. He knew it would be accounted a shameful thing before men, but this He overlooked. He despised it. He looked another way—to the “joy set before Him.” Now, this is the way in which believers are to carry their cross, and to endure patiently the trials of their race. Their comfort is this—there is nothing penal in their sufferings—they are not in the way of punishment. That is done with. Christ bare this in His own body on the tree! once for all! Therefore, there is nothing, in this respect, which they need to fear or be ashamed of. Still, no doubt, we shall meet with many things in our race, of which, through the feebleness of our faith, we shall be ashamed,

and this is really our shame; but there will be nothing in the race which God appoints us, of which we need to be ashamed, any more than we need be ashamed of being "appointed to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 9). There is nothing shameful in serving God, any more than in being a child of God. It is an honour, not a disgrace, to a child to obey its Father! No! however lowly the service to which God calls us, let it only be His appointment, and then to sweep a crossing is as honourable as to sit on a throne. It is the Master we serve, and the motive of our service, which make it honourable. So there is nothing shameful in running the race He has set before us. We shall be called to exhibit principles and conduct of which the world will be ashamed, and for which they will heap contempt and scorn upon us,—as says the Psalmist, after telling us that his eyes were always waiting upon the Lord—in other words, "looking unto Jesus"—he mentions the treatment to

which, in consequence, he was subjected by the world : “ Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud ” (Ps. cxxiii. 4). Observe, too, “ Because for thy sake, I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour : mine adversaries are all before Thee ” (Ps. lxix. 7, 19). Here is the comfort, “ Mine adversaries are *all before Thee*.” As the race is appointed by Thee ; so the circumstances of it—the hindrances of it—the trials of it—are “ all before Thee.”

But all this kind of suffering and shame we are to endure patiently ; yea, despise—it is to be as nothing “ for the joy that is set before us ”—because, in connexion with this joy, there is a hope “ which maketh not ashamed ” (Rom. v. 5). No doubt, the Christian would constantly have occasion to be ashamed were it not for the hope of “ the joy set before him.” As Paul says, “ If in

this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). But having this hope, and having "the joy set before him," he says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18)—meaning, I have considered the whole thing, and have come to this conclusion, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared," &c. So you will have to suffer—no doubt of that—but then you are to regard it even as an honour (Phil. i. 29): and if you suffer as a Christian, Peter says, "Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter iv. 16). But I beg you to observe: "The joy set before us" is inseparably connected with "looking unto Jesus"—lose sight of Him, and joy is gone. But the consciousness of union with Him, and of the successful issue of the conflict, will enable you to endure to the end! Remember—you do not suffer alone. "In all their

affliction He was afflicted" (Isa. lxiii. 9). He who enabled Peter and John, after they had been beaten, to rejoice "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts v. 41), will be with you! But take heed to this—be sure to run in the course He has set before you—be sure to run according to the rules laid down for you in Scripture. Look away from all other things. Keep Christ simply and singly before you, and you will be safe and able to endure.

II. WHAT SUSTAINED HIM.

"The joy set before him." How strong must have been this principle! It shone, as a light, through all the darkness of His course—beckoning Him onwards. Observe the fixedness of His resolution, "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 51). He was as one eager for the conflict, panting to have it over. He said, "I have a baptism to be

baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished (Luke xii. 50).

Do we ask what it was? Redeeming the Church. Buying it, though with the price of His own blood. Setting forth, in His own death, the means by which all His sheep were to be gathered into one flock. The joy in the Saviour's soul, in the prospect of His work, is prophetically declared—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. xxii. 22). This was the object for which He lived and died and rose again. Observe His loving heart—"My Brethren." This is the term He used to Mary after His resurrection, and this is the light in which He regards us now. "Brethren"—"He is not ashamed to call us brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). "He is the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). His omniscient eye darted through the brief period which lay between His own suffering course and the day when He shall come again in His glory with all

His saints (1 Thess. iii. 13). He surveyed with a glance the season of His Church's trials—the intricacies—hindrances—difficulties of the race His Brethren have to run—and He sees the end! He sees of the "travail of His soul and is satisfied." He sees "that beautiful flock," for which He give Himself, all gathered—not one missing. He "presents it a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27). He sees the great work completed—His people saved and glorified! This was the joy set before Him, and which sustained Him.

And is not this the joy which should fill our hearts as we patiently endure in our course? Must we not look, beyond the trials of the way, to the end? to the joy of being with Christ—of being delivered from a groaning world—of being beyond the reach of sin—of meeting all those who have departed hence in the Lord? Who could endure, were it not for this? Who could bear

to feel that there was nothing better for him than to live as he does now among the dying, and to be following, as he often is, the dead to the grave? What heart, that feels the inexpressible evil of sin, in the misery and suffering it occasions, not only in his own heart but in the world around, could bear the painful life that many of the saints of God lead? But faith in Christ gives an entirely different aspect to trial and suffering. It connects them with a definite purpose of God. It sees in them a specific object in the shape of blessing to the believer's soul. It regards them as a necessary part of the course which conducts to joys above. And God's plan of love would be incomplete, but for the lessons to be learned in the school of suffering. The believer, therefore, patiently submits to God's dispensations for the present, knowing that though there be tears below there are songs above, and that, one day, there will be the inconceivable joy of sitting down at the right hand of God.

Oh, what a scene will that be when the conqueror receives the crown, "which the Lord the righteous judge shall give him in that day!" when that mighty "multitude, which no man can number, shall be gathered from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, and shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and shall cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb"—and the question shall be asked, "What are these, which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" and it shall be answered, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 9, 14). These are they who have struggled bravely in the Christian race, and through faith in Christ, have won it. And then you shall recognise those whom you have known and loved in Christ on earth, and who have

patiently endured to the end. There you will see those who ran their race in silence, and in the shade—unknown, unmentioned among men, now emerging from their temporary obscurity, and “shining forth like the sun in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.” There you will see the once feeble creature who ran the race on a bed of sickness—whose joints were distorted by pain—whose body was wasted to a skeleton—whose face was deeply lined by suffering—and the furrows on whose cheeks were but channels for the tears:—But now, no more of this—the tears all wiped away—the vile body changed and fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body—“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints”—ready to sit down “at the marriage supper of the Lamb.” There is the crown of gold upon the head—the palm of victory in the hand. There is the new song swelling through the vaults of Heaven: “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God out of

every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. v. 9, 10); and we shall hear, as it were, "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. xix. 6).

This is the joy set before us, to make us not ashamed of the Cross of Christ. Nothing less! And is it not enough to make us "endure the cross, and despise the shame?"

We come now to the consideration of—

III. WHAT HE HAS ATTAINED.

"Set down at the right hand of the throne of God:" "Set down"—in token that He has done His work (Heb. x. 11, 12): "Expecting till His enemies be made His footstool:" Ordering all things by His wisdom and power, till His Church has run her race—till her discipline is complete—and she is "made meet to partake the inheritance of the saints in light!" Christ is now at the

right hand of God! He is “entered into heaven as our forerunner” (Heb. vi. 20)—as our Representative; and, as the Head is there, the members are sure to follow. For His glory is to be ours (John xvii. 22). Where He is there are we to be—in the mansions He is gone before to prepare.

And if we would run our race successfully here, we must now take by faith our place there (Eph. ii. 6). It is ours! by His purchase for us, and gift to us. Our affections must be there with Him (Col. iii. 1). Our citizenship must be there (Phil. iii. 20). We must live in our own city, to which Christ has given us the right of entering in (Rev. xxii. 14); and we must come forth in the spirit of heaven to do our work on earth. We must be like men who are here on duty, but who belong above; whose hearts and hopes are there. Yes! brethren, strive to live, not so much looking up from earth to heaven, as looking down from heaven upon earth. Be alive to your privileges as “fellow-

citizens of the saints and of the household of God." This will enable you to pass by, yea to scorn, many of the allurements of earth; you will feel you can afford to forego trifles, because you "have in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Your question will often be, "Does this become a citizen of heaven? What will my Lord think of me, if, having all the privileges of His house, I can turn to the beggarly elements of a world which lieth in wickedness?" This is the way to reason if you would live as you ought. Think of what is said—"As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). In spirit we are to anticipate the glory. He says we shall not only see His glory, but possess it. He has given it to us: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John xvii. 22). What a thought is this! You, a poor, weak, feeble, sinful worm, often wandering and straying, yet, by faith, a possessor of Christ's glory yet to be revealed.

Rise up to a right estimate of this privi-

lege; it will do great things for you. It will raise the tone of your conduct; it will keep you humble and lowly in spirit; it will make you step warily and carefully, like those who are clad in white; it will make you watchful against the spirit of the world—against the indulgence of the flesh; it will make you, like Paul, “keep under your body, and bring it into subjection.” Remember, your right place, as a believer, is with Christ at the right hand of God, and it is but a question of time—of patient waiting and doing all His will—and “yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. x. 37). If the thought of having His Church with Him for ever carried joy to Christ’s heart, so should the prospect of being with Him bring joy also to us! It is a grand reality, fixed and certain, in the purpose of God; purchased by the blood of Christ—secured in the everlasting covenant. Every day brings this blessed consummation nearer—every struggle of Christian principle brings

you nearer to the crown of victory. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Live like that man who watches for His Lord's return, that when He cometh and knocketh he may open to Him immediately. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing" (Luke xii. 36, 43).

Let me ask, in conclusion, Have you the principle of the Christian race—faith, true simple faith in the person of the Son of God? Have you made sure of this? Without this, all is vain. With it, all is sure! See in the witnesses what faith can do and suffer. It is the same victorious principle now as then. There is "one faith." The same thing in Abel and Abraham as in you who are Christ's now. Capable of as great things now as then. Let it "work by love" (Gal. v. 6). It will enable you to "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you"—to pluck out the right eye, or to cut off

the right hand"—to do hard things—yea, things otherwise impossible. Faith will enable you to "run with patience the race set before you" humbly, cheerfully, diligently, resolutely—not murmuring or wishing for another course—only desiring manfully to contend with, and overcome, the difficulties and appointments of this; and patiently to endure to the end. Remember the proper object of faith is Christ—look to Him—and His joy shall animate you—and His glory consummate your race!

And ought not a thought like this to add earnestness to our running? Ought it not to constrain us to a more prayerful spirit, that we may have more godly decision of character, greater energy in the resistance of sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and greater patience to endure the trials of our course, more holy resolution to make Christ our all in all—to bring His sanctifying power to bear on every step and struggle of our race, so that we may live more like men that belong to

Him, with our loins girt for earnest service and our lights burning—thus holding forth the word of life to others? Let us try to live so, dear brethren, in patient, cheerful contentment with our lot—making the best of things as they are—not cast down by difficulties, nor thinking ourselves forsaken in the hour of trial—but maintaining a kind and loving heart to all our fellow-men—a ready hand to help them, and a bright word to cheer them; and, above all, a dutiful, obedient, and trustful heart towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me entreat you to make it a matter of earnest prayer, that the subject which I have brought before you may be written on your hearts by God's Holy Spirit—that the Word of God may be increasingly precious to you—the Christian race a subject of increasing earnestness—the solemn purpose of winning, by God's grace, a matter of growing importance—that “so running you may obtain,” and receive at length “a crown of glory that

fadeth not away." I leave for your meditation and comfort the passage of Scripture which has supplied the subject, "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

THE END.

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